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# SILENT SHOT, THE SLYLER;

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# SILENT SHOT, THE SLAYER;

OR, THE

## SECRET CHAMBER OF THE HUNTER'S LODGE

### CHAPTER I.

#### SILENT SHOT.

The "mad" Missouri lay boiling and surging beneath the hot, sultry sun of an August day. Not the least breeze ruffled its turbulent current, nor stirred the forest-leaves, nor swayed the long, skeleton-like willow boughs that trailed in its waters. Far away up and down the stream, on the west side, stretched the green wooded hills of Nebraska, reaching down to the water's brink; while, upon the Iowa side—far as the eye could reach to the north or south—that grand, rugged and picturesque chain of hills known as Council Bluffs, rose up in bold relief against the eastern sky like so many grim and giant sentinels. Only those who have looked upon that chain of "eternal hills" can conceive what a wild weird sight of romantic beauty they possess—rivaled only by the great Yo-semite.

It was toward the close of the day upon which our story opens, that a man was standing upon the sharp summit of one of those many bluffs looking toward the silent river rolling through the valley far below. He was in the very prime of manhood—not more than five and thirty years, with a form a little above the medium height, and denoting health, strength and activity.

His dark-brown hair was cut closely to his well-defined head, while his whiskers of many months' growth hung low upon his breast. His eyes were dark and brilliant—expressive of the deepest and strongest emotions of the heart, of either love or hatred. His trowsers and moccasins were made of buck-skin, while his hunting-shirt was of blue velveteen,

highly ornamented with yellow fringe around the shoulders and skirts; and his head was surmounted with a cap, resembling the skull-cap worn by the old Teutonic professor.

A leather belt, handsomely ornamented with wampum, girdled his waist, and supported a long, polished knife and a side tomahawk. At his back hung a quiver of curious contrivance, filled with a number of sharp and glittering pointed arrows, while he held, or rather leaned upon, a long and powerful bow of exquisite workmanship and finish, and of artistic shape.

Thus appeared Silent Shot, the terror of the Indian, the friend of the frontier settlements. Two years previous to the opening of our story he came among the savages of western Iowa like a hurricane, but with the silence of death itself. Where he came from, and who he was, the few settlers whom he chanced to meet knew not; but it was naturally supposed, of course, that he knew as little and cared as little for his past as men of his wild, adventurous life usually did.

The sobriquet of Silent Shot was given him by the Indians, from the fact that the bow and arrow were his main weapons. With these he had made himself a terror—often sending death into the midst of the savages when the distance had been too great for the longest-ranged rifle.

He argued with his fellow hunters that rifles were noisy and expensive nuisances—the report of the first shot destroying all chances of a second; while with the bow and arrow he had been known to bring down three or four deer without raising an alarm; also, upon different occasions, he had slain half a dozen savages ere the survivors could tell from whence came the missiles of death.

Stretched upon the ground at the scout's feet was a large, sleek grayhound, which for years had been his constant companion, and an invaluable assistance in trailing the cunning savage and stalking the deer.

For some time Silent Shot stood and gazed away toward the river as though he were watching for something or some one; then he turned his head and swept the green valley far below and above with an eagle-like glance. Nothing, however, met his gaze; and, taking up his long bow, he be-

gan to descend the bluff toward the river, his faithful dog following at his heels.

Scarcely had he reached the plain below, when a casual observer might have seen several puffs of blue smoke ascend into the air from a clump of bushes that covered the summit of a high bluff, adjacent to the one from which the scout had descended. This strange proceeding had a significant meaning, but only those acquainted with the Indians' system of telegraphy could have read the import of the message communicated through the agency of the smoke. But far away over among the wooded hills on the Nebraska side of the river, several pairs of savage eyes saw and read the message.

Reaching the foot of the bluff, the scout struck across the valley toward the river, all unconscious of the basilisk eyes that were upon him. A few minutes' brisk walking brought him to the edge of a belt of cottonwoods that bordered the stream. Pushing his way carefully through the bushes he approached the stream. As he did so, the light dip of an oar fell upon his practiced ear; and stopping, he parted the green shrubbery and peered out upon the water. He saw a tiny bark canoe, with a young Indian woman in it, approaching the spot where he was concealed from the opposite shore.

Some secret power seemed to hold the scout spell-bound, for he stood in the thick shrubbery motionless as a statue, and gazed at the canoe and its occupant. His dog seemed pervaded with the same spirit and remained as motionless as his master.

In a few moments the canoe touched the shore a few steps above where our hero stood concealed; then the Indian woman rose to her feet and gazed cautiously around.

She was young, beautiful and graceful, with features purely Anglo-Saxon, and a form that would have been the ideal of the ancient sculptor. Her dark eyes flashed like brilliant jewels, and her hair—black-bronzed as the raven's wing, hung down her back in numerous braids. She was dressed in a frock of some green material that fitted her form neatly. Her feet were incased in beaded moccasins, while upon her head was a beautiful wreath of delicate green vines interspersed

with beautiful wild flowers. Numerous strands of curious shells and beads encircled her neck, and jewels flashed upon her arms and wrists.

For a few moments the woman continued to gaze about her; then she turned and sprung nimbly onto the beach. As she did so, a limb caught and tore open her dress-sleeve, revealing an arm of snowy-whiteness, to the surprise of the silent watcher. But, fearful lest some one should see, she quickly clasped and fastened the torn sleeve. The next moment a young Indian chief emerged from the undergrowth and stood before her. He was tall, graceful, and handsome—the noblest specimen of manhood that Silent Shot had ever looked upon.

"So the Summer Cloud is true to her word," Silent Shot had heard the chief say, in broken English.

"Did the brave chief, Okalealah, ever know his wife to do otherwise?" the woman asked.

Silent Shot started. He clutched nervously for an arrow, but before he could obtain it, Okalealah and Summer Cloud had vanished in the shrubbery like a mist of vapor before the morning sun. He did not follow them; his mind seemed too much absorbed in thought; but, after awhile, he turned and walked down to the water's edge, and lifting some trailing willows, a canoe was revealed resting on the beach.

In a moment he had launched the little craft upon the water, and, with his dog, embarked therein for down the river.

Had he glanced away to the left at this juncture, he would have seen several Indians descend the identical bluff upon which he had stood a few moments before—take up his trail and set off to follow it like so many blood-hounds. However, he thought not of danger, but continued to drive this feathery craft forward for some time; then he allowed the oars to hang loose in the lock and the canoe to drift at the will of the current, while he gave himself up to deep reflection, in which the faces of Okalealah and Summer Cloud were uppermost.

Presently, however, he was aroused from his reverie by the rumbling of distant thunder, and turning his head he beheld the whole north-western sky growing black with a storm-cloud,

while low along the horizon, dull, electric flashes could be seen. The wind had begun to sweep up from the south in warm and fretful gusts, ruffling the surface of the turbid river, and rocking the little canoe as though it had been an egg-shell.

"Ay! a storm is comin', Harmony, ole boy," exclaimed the scout, addressing his canine companion; "we must hurry along and make the island, sink or swim."

So saying, the scout seized the oars and drove the canoe forward so swift that it seemed "a thing of life," gliding so easily over the boiling, surging waters.

In a few moments it began to grow dark—not, however, before the island in question appeared in sight. It was but a small sand-bar in the center of the river, thickly covered with old logs and *débris* of different kinds, left there by previous high waters.

Soon the canoe touched upon the upper side of the island, and both man and dog sprung out upon the beach.

Turning about, Silent Saot was in the act of securing his canoe, when, suddenly, there came a strong gust of wind and drove it out into the stream beyond his reach. This was quite a mishap, as well as a misfortune, for the canoe was almost indispensable to the long journey the scout had just begun. He resolved to regain the truant craft now drifting away at the will of the current; so he at once divested himself of his belt and quiver, and was in the act of plunging into the water, when, to his surprise and indignation, he beheld a large Sioux Indian rise up out of the water—spring into the canoe—seize the oars and drive it from view around an abrupt bend in the river. At the same instant a triumphant savage yell greeted his ears, coming from either shore, where Silent Shot discovered a score of red-skins looking toward him and gesticulating in an excited manner.

Fierce with rage, the scout seized his bow and sent an arrow among the savages with deadly effect, causing them to beat a hasty retreat to the cover of some cottonwood bushes. But the scout himself was soon compelled to seek the shelter of some logs to escape a terrible cross-fire from the savages.

The white man at once admitted to himself that he was in a little the tightest place he ever was in. In fact, he could

see no possible chance of escape, for, while the savages would prevent him from landing on the other shore, the waters were too rough for him to attempt escape by swimming up or down the river. What else could he do but remain upon the island? Alas! a terrible and startling realization rushed across his mind: the river would be swollen by the coming storm—the little island overflowed and he swept away in the ~~wind~~, ~~seething~~ waters.

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## CHAPTER II

### A NIGHT OF ADVENTURES.

SILENT SHOT was not the man to flinch, even in the very face of death, and, although his case now seemed hopeless, he resolutely resolved to wait and watch, and if no chance of escape was offered, to meet his fate like a man.

Owing to the roughness of the river, he knew the savages would not attempt to cross over to the island; still, he was well satisfied that they would never lose sight of the place so long as he was upon it.

By this time it was dark: the storm was threatening to break loose at every moment. The scout, knowing that it would be a terrible night, at once began crawling about in search of some place to shelter from the rain. Much to his joy he found an immense hollow log that would answer the purpose, and, sending his dog in before him, he followed close behind, drawing after him a short, thick log, thus concealing the opening from prying eyes, should any one happen upon the island.

An awful gloom, by this time, had settled over the land; the woods and bluffs were lost in the double darkness of night and storm. The rain began to fall in torrents from the low-lying clouds, and the winds, howling through the woods and bluffs like a maddened demon, beat and lashed the dark waters of the turbulent river to a foam. The whole heavens were a quiver with the lurid lightnings which now and then seemed to envelop the earth in a sheet of fire. The deep

toned thunder rolled in constant peals, trying, it seemed, to out-rival the fury of the other elements in their awful revelry..

" Some would have been terrified had they been placed in Silent Shot's position ; but not so with him. He loved nature in her wildest moods. To him the roar of the wind and thunder, the beating of the rain against the shell-like log and the rushing, swashing waters were like music ; and though in the most imminent peril, he could not help laughing to himself at the novelty of his situation. He also congratulated himself upon securing such an admirab'e shelter. The dimensions of the log were commodious enough to admit of his sitting upright with ease ; and he was not only sheltered from the driving rain but the Indians' bullets also ; though he discovered with some regret, that the opposite end of the log rested in the river, for he could hear and feel the water beating against it. However, he soon forgot the surrounding danger, and, lulled by the continuous roar of the storm, and the gentle swaying of the log, he allowed himself to fall into a sound sleep, trusting to the keen instinct of his sagacious dog to warn him of any instant danger.

How long he had slept he knew not, but he was finally aroused by Harmony's movements. Starting up, he suddenly became conscious that he was ~~safely~~ in several inches of water.

" Thunder ! Holy Jerus'lem ! ugh ! ugh ! Harmony, ole boy, what the deuce—ugh!—does this mean ? ugh !" the scout exclaimed, his mind somewhat confused.

The dog set up a pitiful whining, and began floundering about in the water in vain attempt to escape from the log.

Soon the terrible reality of his situation flashed across the boy's mind. The rain had swollen the river—the island was being overflowed—the log was filling, and soon he would be swept down, down in the awful caldron of surging waters !

Flinging from the log, thought the scout, was the first act intended to saving himself from drowning, but the thought did scarcely enter his mind when there came a terrible gust of wind and swung the log around ; then, with a sudden lurch, it arose several inches out of the water, and the next instant Silent Shot was conscious of being afloat on the

river—imprisoned in the log, over which the waves beat angrily, sullenly.

The scout closed his eyes, as if to shut out a horrible sight, and bit his lips in terrible suspense, expecting each moment the waters to close in over him. But happy was his disappointment, for he discovered that the log kept a regular and well-balanced position upon the water, and that the water rose no higher on the inside. However, he resolved to attempt an escape while it seemed possible; but even this resolution he was compelled to forego, for he found, upon trial, that with all his strength he could not remove the chunk from the mouth of the log; a heavy mass of floating débris had lodged against it, defying his efforts.

The scout saw now that he was fastened in the floating log, no difference to what fate he was drifting; but as he became more accustomed to his situation, his mind grew easier. The log was but little more than half-filled with water, and the scout and the dog experienced no difficulty in keeping their bodies above the surface, and as the night was exceedingly warm they suffered not from chilliness. In this novel and precarious situation, the man and dog floated on, though Silent Shot admitted to himself that he could not laugh to himself now at the novelty of his situation, as he had done a short time before, when safely and dryly ensconced in the log on the island.

When and where he would land, the scout had not the faintest conception, but he could not but think otherwise than that he was being providentially delivered from the power of the red-skins, and could find no very serious cause for complaint, so long as the old log kept as quietly on as it had started.

It was several hours before the storm had spent its fury; then, as it died away, the river became tranquil and the stars looked out through the rift in the scudding clouds. There was a hole in the log, directly over Lis Head, Silent Shot peeped out at "passing events," and from the swiftness with which an occasional star would glide by, he knew that he was "beam-ing along at a rapid rate." In order to get a better view of the outside world, he took his knife and spent several moments in enlarging his look-out in the log. This he had completed

of sufficient size to pass his hand out, when he was startled by a splashing in the water and the sound of human voices.

Applying his ear to the look-out, he discovered that the voices were those of Indians, who, evidently, were swimming in the water. In a few minutes more he felt a dull, vibratory shock of the log, and felt the water creeping higher under his arms. Then a horrible realization flashed across his mind. *The savages were climbing upon the log, no difference what their object had been in coming there.*

Again and again, he felt that vibratory shock, and each time he knew a savage was mounting the log, for it continued to sink deeper and deeper—endangering the situation each moment.

The scout's fears were aroused. What next was to occur? What had brought the red-skins there? Did they know of any one being within the floating log? These were the questions that revolved rapidly and repeatedly through his mind, and while he was trying to draw some conclusion therefrom, he saw one of the savages slide along and sit within a few inches of his look-out overhead.

From the red-skin's actions, the scout was fully convinced that they were totally ignorant of his being in the log; however, he resolved to put into execution a plan that would, in all probability, remove some of the savage weight from the log, for the water had risen in quite a disagreeable proximity to his neck, and it required considerable effort to keep Harmony's head above water mark. So, drawing his long knife, the scout slipped his hand out at the hole overhead and thrust the weapon to the hilt in the savage's side. With a yell of mortal pain the red-skin clutched at the open air, reeled and tottered, and at last rolled backward into the river, dead. At the same instant Silent Shot noticed that the water in the log fell an inch or more.

Unconscious of what had been the cause of their comrade's death, and from whence it had come so suddenly, the other savages began crawling along the log, trying to secnnd their companion, but in doing so another of their number got within reach of the scout's long knife, and met an unknown death, the same as his companion; and as he rolled from the log, Silent Shot noticed another and quite a material change in

the depth of the water about his shoulders. But the surviving savages now began to mistrust something. They had caught the flash of some bright object as it slipped into the log and one of their number, more bold than wise, drew his knife, and, crawling up to the hole, thrust his hand into the log and began cutting right and left.

Now came Harmony's part in the bloody play. Springing forward like a dart, he seized the red-skin by the wrist, biting his fangs in the flesh and causing the muscles to relax till the knife dropped from his hand. The savage set up a yell that shook the log and almost deafened its inmates, while his companions seized him by the limbs and hair and attempted to drag him away; but their efforts only added to his pain and howls, and not until Silent Shot had severed his arm was he released. Then drawing the bloody stump from the log, he sprung into the river, and howling forth cries of pain and fear, struck out for shore, closely followed by his surviving companions, who had equally been horrified by a fierce growl from Harmony, mingled with a triumphant yell from his master.

Much to his delight, Silent Shot found that the leg had regained its former depth in the water and floated quietly along; though it ever remained a mystery in his mind what object the red skins had in coming out upon the river as they did that night.

By this time the night was far spent. The sky had grown clear, and the moon looked out. The wind had ceased to blow and a deep silence reigned, broken only by the water's chasing the log. Now and then the scout caught a glimpse of the bluffs looming up like giant sentinels into the sky, weird, grim and ghostlike.

Morning dawned, clear and warm, but it still found him afloat upon the river. However, he determined to release himself from his floating prison if possible. He tried the chisel in the mouth of the leg again, and found no trouble in prising it out. He then crawled to the mouth of the other leg, and succeeded in crawling out upon the top, the dog following his master's example.

What a terrible sight was presented to the scout's gaze! The water was out of the river-bank, and stretched away

for nearly a mile on either side; and its turbid surface was black with floating logs and débris that was being tossed hither and thither on the surging waves in the wildest confusion.

The next object was to reach land; but this was the most difficult undertaking, owing to the immense amount of floating matter in the way; nevertheless, Silent Shot was not prone to waste time in idle speculation, and catching up a long pole from the water, he commenced veering gradually off toward the east shore, by pushing with the pole against such logs and bodies of timber that were floating within reach.

Great was his joy when he again stood upon land and felt that he was free and safe; and in the exuberance of joy, he thought that all nature seemed more beautiful—that the birds sang sweeter—the brooks and creeks rippled more musical—the flowers looked brighter—the grass and foliage greener, than he had ever seen them before.

Since he had lost his canoe, and had been delayed some time, the scout gave up his intended journey, and concluded to change his course to Morris Settlement, inasmuch as he was but half a day's travel from the place.

So he at once set off, feeling none the better of his night's soaking, and quite disagreeable in his wet buck-skin clothes. His course lay through a deep forest, and in threading its gloomy mazes he came upon the smoldering embers of a deserted camp-fire. Here he stopped, and gathering fuel soon had a glowing fire. He now removed his outer garments and spread them out before the fire to dry. While thus engaged, a young deer came bounding by, and quicker than a dart, Harmony sprung out and seized it. This was quite fortunate, for the scout was already suffering the pangs of hunger; and it was but a few minutes before a rich, juicy slice of the fawn was broiling upon some coals, sending forth a delicious odor.

Harmony feasted himself upon the tender flesh, then came and stretched himself down by the fire, and, with his nose between his paws, watched his master's movements with almost a human look of intelligence.

By the time that Silent Shot had dried his clothes and eaten his meal, the sun had gone down, and, feeling tired

and sleepy, he concluded to lie down and take a short rest before resuming his journey. So he at once stretched himself near the fire, trusting his safety to the vigilant instinct of his dog.

In a few moments he had sunk into a deep slumber, and would have slept no doubt until morning, had he not been aroused by his dog. Rising to a sitting posture, he gazed about like one bewildered. Darkness had long since set in, and the fire had burned down to a few red coals that threw a lurid, sickly light around.

"What is it, Harmony, ole boy? what is it?" the scout asked, bending his head in the attitude of listening.

The dog pricked up his long ears and dashed away into the bushes, then back again in the most excited manner.

Suddenly Silent Shot sprung to his feet and clutched his knife. Was it reality? Was it a voice—a human voice that he heard calling for help? He stirred the fire and threw on more fuel; then he turned, and walking beyond the circle of light, and shading his eyes with his hand as if to enable him to penetrate the gloom, he bent slightly forward and listened. Yes, it was reality; for again his practiced ears caught that imploring cry:

"Help! help! help!"

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## CHAPTER III.

### THE MISSING HUNTER.

EARLY in the morning of the day previous to that on which our story opens, a young man, mounted upon a spirited animal, rode sharply out from Fort Des Moines toward the west. From the bright flashing of his pleasant blue eyes, the healthful flush of his handsome face, the erectness of his graceful form and the impatient cantering of his noble steed, it was quite evident that he had just started upon a journey.

This young man, whom we will introduce to the reader as Walter Gray, was not far from five and twenty years of age.

In his general appearance he was prepossessing. A little above the medium, rather slender but fully developed in muscular proportions, his hair was a dark brown, as was also his mustache, that shaded an expressive and well-defined mouth. His eyes were of a soft blue, through which were reflected all the nobler emotions and sentiments of the human heart. And, too, there shone the light of a commanding will and indomitable courage.

He was dressed in the style of garb usually worn by the frontiersman—half savage and half civilized—and carried a brace of revolvers and a rifle, which alone were sufficient evidence of the danger to which he was exposed from the prowling red-men that infested the forests and prairies.

Walter had just started on his return home at Morris Settlement, which was situated about two hard days' ride to the south-west, after having spent several days at the fort on business. That business being to secure aid in hunting out a den of robbers or road-agents, as they were called, that infested the country somewhere not far from the settlement.

Once fairly on the way, the young man reined in his animal to a walk, tightened his belt and saw that his weapons were in readiness for instant use, for as his course now lay for several miles through the dense forest bordering the Raccoon river, he was liable to be attacked at any moment by the savages.

In fact, there were but few that would have undertaken the journey at all, alone and unprotected as he was; but Walter was brave, even to disregard of danger. Besides, he had promised his old parents—yea! and her whom he was to make his wife on his return—that he would be home at such a time, and he resolved, God willing, to make good his promise, notwithstanding the perils to which he would be exposed.

Pressing steadily and cautiously forward, he reached the outskirts of the timber about noon, and previous to entering the broad prairie that stretched away before him for miles and miles, he waited for a few minutes to let his animal rest in the shade and crop the rich green grass, while he partook of a dinner of dried venison procured at the fort. This, however, required but a few minutes, and he had mounted his

animal and was about resuming his journey, when he caught the sound of approaching hoofs.

In an instant his hand dropped to his revolver, but, before he could draw it, a strange yet friendly voice called out :

" Hullo, thar, lad, keep back yer fusee, fur I'm a friend but a stranger. I'm Bart Orson, hunter and trapper o' the lower De' Mine. Whither away, my lad ?" and as the voice concluded, a man, mounted on a jaded-looking animal, emerged from the thick shrubbery and drew rein before Walter.

" I'm happy to make your acquaintance, Orson," replied Walter, somewhat surprised at meeting the strange hunter. " I am on my way to Morris Settlement, about one day and a half's ride to the west, and would be much pleased to have company."

" How nigh to the Hunter's Lodge d'ye go ?" asked Orson.

" Thirty miles to the south. Are you going there ?"

" I reckon us what I am."

" Good !" replied Walter ; " then our journey will be together most of the way, so we may as well ride on and discuss matters as we go."

" Sartinly, sartinly !"

So saying, they emerged from the timber and struck across the great prairie. Walter was much pleased in securing the companionship of the hunter, though there was nothing in his rough, bearded face and gruff, cracked voice, that was calculated to make a very favorable impression on the young man's mind. And now and then he would catch his black, flashing eyes, and fairly strut at the strange familiarity shining in them.

" Are you acquainted at the Hunter's Lodge, Mr. Orson ?"

" Wal, I know one 'r two o' the hunters and the big gent, Barak McGavitt, who I understand makes his head-quarters there most o' his time," the hunter replied.

" I suppose you will join the company, or lodge of hunters ?"

" Don't know but I will if they'll take me in, fur I've learned as what it's a mon'y-makin' 'rangement."

" Yes ; game is plenty, and I hear that the hunters, all working together, make a very successful thing of it."

So I've heard, and I thought I'd run up and see, ennyhow. Besides, my old friend, McGavitt, the Injun agent, gave me a slight hint that he was goin' to be married 'bout this time, and wanted as I should be in 'tendance o' the little affair."

"Really," exclaimed Walter, "that is the first I have heard of that."

"And live to the settlement!" said Orson, with apparent surprise. "Why, old Morris' gal—Mattie I believe's her name—is to be the happy bride."

There was something peculiarly strange in the tone of the speaker, and the flash of his small black eyes, that sent the hot blood rushing to Walter's brain. It was quite evident that the hunter knew more of him than he pretended to, and was aiming, either to embarrass Walter, or that he had some secret object, for, to Miss Mattie Morris, Walter himself was engaged, and was to be married on his return from the fort. As to Barak McGavitt, his name had never before been mentioned in connection with Miss Morris, so far as matrimony was concerned; besides, Walter knew that his betrothed held in great aversion the Indian agent. But whatever the hunter's motives, Walter determined to show no apprehension; in all probability the truth would eventually crop out in his companion's unguarded conversation.

But Walter had greatly underrated the caution of the hunter, for, by the most apparent indifference and the closest cross-questioning, he elicited nothing; and, for fear of arousing suspicion or suspicion in the hunter's mind, the subject was dropped, and they continued their journey in friendly conversation on various topics.

Orson proved himself quite an agreeable companion, despite his general repulsiveness of appearance; and finally Walter was sorry that he had presumed to question the honesty and purity of the pale, blanched Indian man.

Their first day was passed with no trouble from the Redskins, and at night they camped on the open prairie. Laying their animals, they wrapped themselves in their blankets and stretched themselves out on the grass. Soon they fell asleep and slept soundly until early dawn. By sunrise they were on their way, though the day was warm and sultry, with

a hot, dry wind blowing from the south. Toward evening the wind began to rise, and a dull, leaden haze drifted up the western horizon, while, ever and anon, a faint electric flash could be seen through its misty vail.

"We are going to have a storm, Orson," said Walter, as he swept the western sky with a regretful look.

"True, sur ye," replied the hunter, his face lighting up with an unusual glow; "but a storm is nothin' o' consequence to Bart Orson. To me thar's somethin' grand in the nativ' elements—the howlin' wind, the drivin' rain, the growlin' thunder, and—"

"Ay, my friend, you are growing eloquent," exclaimed Walter; "and not changing the subject—do you think we can make yon belt of timber before the storm overtakes us?"

"Wal, we kin try," returned Orson, "and if we do we kin find shelter there."

"Then let us ride briskly forward, for night will come with the storm."

"Lashing their animals into a gallop, they moved on over the great prairie. Only an occasional word now and then passed between them; but several times Walter caught the eyes of the hunter resting upon him with more than usual interest.

In a few minutes' sharp riding they entered the broad belt of timber bordering the Nishnabotua river. Tethering their animals out to grass on the edge of the prairie, they selected a camp beneath the wide-spreading branches of a mighty oak.

Such provisions as they had were now produced, and the two seated themselves to partake of their meal. They had been seated but a few moments, however, when a faint sound, not unlike the baying of a wolf, was borne to their ears, coming from up the river.

"Did you hear that?" asked Walter, starting up with sudden emotion.

"Yes; replied the hunter, "it sounds like the barkin' o' a wolf, and yit thar was somethin' peculiar 'bout it."

"A peculiarity that makes me believe it came from the throat of a red-skin," said Walter.

"It mout be sich a thing, lad, and highly necessary that one o' us go out and look about."

The hunter spoke so frankly and impressively that Walter's fears were at once aroused. His interest and confidence in him had greatly increased, and he knew, from his natural cautiousness, that the hunter would leave no point unguarded against the wily red-man.

"If you'll stay and make up a fire to smoke off the musketeers and fix up the camp, I'll take a scout through the woods," added the old hunter.

"Just as you p'ease, Orson, for your knowledge of Indian-craft is superior to mine."

"I'll be 'round in half an hour or so; keep a sharp look out fur skulkin' reds."

So saying, he turned and walked away into the woods, going *doun the river*.

Walter stood and watched him until he had disappeared; then he struck a fire and set about preparing a kind of a tent of poles and blankets. In a few minutes his task was completed, and then he threw himself upon the ground before the fire to await the return of his friend.

By this time nightfall had settled over the great prairies, and the dark, green woodland; and, too, the storm was near at hand. Already the red lightning had begun to run its fiery race through the clouds, and shoot its flaming darts across the dome of heaven, followed by peal after peal of sharp and terrible thunder. The wind swept fiercely across the plain, and shrieked through the forest like a lost spirit—now, sighing and sobbing like some broken heart telling some dark and awful secret—now, heaving and howling like some maddened demon; while darker and darker it grew each moment, as the clouds, so close overhead went skurrying by.

Walter sat and watched the lightning, listened to the wind, ever and anon throwing a fresh stick of fuel into the dancing, shimmering fire; now bending his head to listen for the footsteps of the hunter.

He felt certain he would come soon, and allowed himself to fall into a deep reverie, from which he was finally aroused by the distant report of a gun.

Springing to his feet he gazed about with a kind of startled and bewildered look into the double darkness of night and storm.

Orson had not returned, although an hour and more had passed since his departure. A terrible apprehension rushed across Walter's mind. Perhaps the hunter had fallen a victim to the cunning savages, or had become lost in the intricate mazes of the gloomy woods? At the top of his voice he shouted the name of his companion, but only the sound of his own voice was borne back to his ears on the wings of the gathering storm. Then he turned and stoked up the fire, and put on more fuel, in hopes that its light might catch his sight and guide him back to camp.

Fanned by the wind, the blaze soon flapped out like great, red wings, and lit up the surrounding gloom for many rods.

Walter paced to and fro beneath the giant oak with a terrible anxiety and suspense resting upon his mind, starting, ever and anon, with a feeling of sudden affright as the light shifted and danced in weird and grotesque figures against the wall of pitchy gloom beyond.

The hours dragged themselves wearily by, and still he waited and watched in vain the coming of the hunter. The rain was now rattling down through the branches in a continuous and sullen roar. The bellowing thunder mingled with the raving of the wind and the crashing of falling timber. The long howl of some distant wild beast—the screaming of some startled night bird, made the hour awful, terrible! And yet, Walter, brave and steadfast, paced uneasily before the glowing fire, still hopeful that his friend would return.

But Orson came not. The beacon fire burned low, and lisped and sputtered spitefully as the great drops of rain fell upon the glowing coals. All around him Walter imagined he could hear the tread of stealthy feet, or the low whisperings of voices—that he could see dark, shadowy forms glancing about, or the gleaming of basilisk eyes, peering from the dark green shrubbery.

"Surely he has failed to see the light," he mused to himself, "so I will try something else."

He took up his rifle and discharged it. The report echoed out through the howling woods and died away on the storm. Then he fired his revolvers until they were empty—the last report echoing back like the voice of doom.

For a moment Walter stood like a carved statue, gazing

vacantly into the gloom, then he started quickly, for he detected a dark shadow glide across his path and heard a soft footstep behind. He turned quickly around, and, oh, horror! Four grim and hideous-looking savages confronted him with a leer of diabolical triumph upon their painted faces; and, too, four tomahawks were upraised to cut him down in case he attempted escape or resistance.

Walter Gray had often contended with as great odds as those which confronted him; but now his revolvers were empty and useless—the last discharge having proved a signal for the savages' attack upon him. The fate of his new friend, Bart Orson, he read in his (Orson's) blood-stained hunting-shirt that was torn by the savages! He knew that if taken captive, his would be a similar fate, so he at once determined to sell his life dearly. Springing back with the quickness of the lightning that were flitting around him from under the uplifted tomahawks, he seized his rifle, clubbed it, and then swinging it at st<sup>t</sup>, brought it down upon the tufted head of a red-skin with such force that the skull was almost cloven. But this act only served to arouse the deadly spirit of his foes, and, with a terrible war-whoop that meant instant death, they rushed upon the young pale-face.

Walter gave up to die. He bowed his head to meet the blow.

Bat-hark! A flash of lightning seemed to envelop the earth in flame, followed by a peal of thunder that seemed to shake the earth to its very center. A terrible crash overhead, and then the savages and their intended victim were buried in the shattered ruins of the great tree which the thunderbolt had torn almost into atoms. The death-groans of the crushed and mangled victims rose and mingled with the wail of the storm.

## CHAPTER IV

## WHAT OCCURRED IN THE THICKET.

WHEN Burt Orson left Walter Gray he proceeded down the river, as before stated, until he had got beyond his young friend's sight ; then he turned abruptly to the left and moved up the river briskly and without his usual caution. His actions, his movements, and his very features seemed changed as if by magic ; and, after he had traversed the distance of about two miles he halted upon a slight eminence, and, placing a small silver tube to his lips, blew a shrill, prolonged whistle. He then bent his head in the attitude of listening ; and almost instantly he heard the low cry of a night-hawk. A smile of recognition passed over his face, and, starting up, he gazed away in the direction that the sound had come. At the distance of half a mile away he saw a thin column of white smoke rising into the air from the center of a clump of bushes. Thither he turned his footsteps, and in a few minutes was forever lost from view under cover of the thicket.

A quarter of an hour had elapsed when the dull report of a gun came from the thicket ; and ten minutes later four stalwart Indians, one of whom wore the identical hunting-suit of Burt Orson, crept out from the shadows of the thicket and filed away like phantoms in the direction that the hunter had come. And still, a few minutes later, a white man, dressed in a suit of citizen's clothes and a broad-brimmed hat resembling the Mexican sombrero, with his feet and limbs encased in a pair of high-topped boots, at the heels of which jingled a pair of heavy silver spurs, emerged from the thicket on the opposite side, and stopped and looked cautiously around.

A flash of lightning revealed his tall, commanding figure, and smooth, but handsome face, his dark, flashing eyes and his long, straight raven-black hair that hung about his neck. A belt, from which suspended a pair of revolvers, girded his waist, while across his arm hung a heavy blanket.

Scanning the western sky, that was growing black with the gathering storm, the tall unknown muttered to himself:

"A wild night! a wild night! Thunder, lightning and rain—all around me—but what of that? Have I not ridden through darker nights than this, when Satan and his legions seemed gibbering about in every valley and glen? No, no, Barak McGavitt is not the man to flinch from rain and thunder, and as time is precious, I must away."

The rain began to fall. Wrapping his blanket about his shoulders, Barak McGavitt, the Indian agent, turned and cloved away in the direction that Walter Gray's and Burt Orson's camp was located.

When he came in sight of the camp-fire, he kept off to the left of it and emerged into the prairie where the travelers' horses were at grass.

Walking boldly up to Orson's horse, he unfastened it and led it to where the bridles and saddles were placed. Selecting Orson's as he had his horse, he put them onto the animal; then mounting he rode away toward the south. When beyond the immediate vicinity of the camp he turned toward the south-west and spurred his animal into a sharp gallop.

Presently he struck a well-beaten path, into which he turned, and giving his animal the reins, dashed on with an ease which showed that both horse and rider were accustomed to such wild nights upon the prairie.

With what ease did the faithful animal of the missing hunter follow that path—now turning to the right or left by his own accord, just when and where his rider wished him to. Was it instinct that guided the animal through that awful darkness along that narrow path? Or was it that the animal had traveled that road before and become accustomed to its windings as well as the rider?

A few hours' sharp riding brought the agent into a deep forest, where the darkness was so intense that he could not see his hand before him, yet he dashed on with a perfect knowledge of his course. Presently, however, a tiny speck of light caught his eye, gleaming through the gloom far in advance. Toward this he was moving, and as he advanced it grew brighter and larger, until finally he drew rein near a great, ungainly log building, through a window of which the

light was shining. Dismounting and tying his animal in an out-shed, McGivitt walked to the door of the cabin—thrust it open and entered with an abruptness that showed he was at home.

The room into which he entered was a large and spacious one, lighted up by a rude, sputtering fat lamp. The Hunter's Lodge, for this was the name by which this building was known, was built back against a high, perpendicular bank, so that the ground made one of the walls.

Upon the walls and to the rough ceiling overhead, were hung peltries, guns and traps that showed off the profession of the occupants to good advantage. A few woollen stools and a pallet or two of furs constituted the furniture of the cabin, while in the corner, a ladder was placed leading into the loft, where several more fur-pallets had been made for the accommodation of the transient visitors, or hunters.

A single man greeted the agent's entrance in a gruff, coarse voice, with:

"By cats, captain! you here?"

"Don't you see me?" returned Barak, sullenly.

"Yes; but what gits me is your comin' out in such a all-fired storm. Bis'n'ess must be urg'in' eh, captain?"

"Well, yes, quite urging, Jude," replied the agent, throwing aside his gum-blanket and removing his dripping hat. "But how is it—the boys all in?"

"Every cuss o' 'em, captain, and ha'f o' 'em are dead drunk."

"Then admit me to the secret room at once."

So saying, the man addressed as Jude, took from his pocket a large key, and walking to the ground wall of the room, he inserted it into a small hole and turned it. Instantly, a heavy wooden door swung open, revealing a dark passage leading back into the ground. This door was hung with a precision that showed great dexterity of workmanship; and cleverly hidden from the eye by its being covered with a coat of dirt which was held in its place by a masticitious substance, thereby giving the door the exact appearance of the rest of the ground wall—and only those who knew of its being there, would ever have thought of its being there at all.

Entering the dark and narrow passage, Barak McGavitt walked along a few steps until he came to another door. Upon this he gave a few distinct raps, and immediately after a wicket was opened and a gruff voice called out :

"Who demands admittance to this room?"

"I, Barak McGavitt."

The wicket was closed and the door swung open, and Barak McGavitt stepped from the dark passage into the Secret Chamber of the Hunter's Lodge, where he was greeted by a dozen or more rough, ferocious-looking men.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### MORRIS SETTLEMENT.

MORRIS SETTLEMENT was situated about thirty miles south of the Hunter's Lodge, and twenty miles east of the Missouri river. It numbered six families and twenty-eight souls, excepting the hunters and traders that made it their home; and at the time of which I write, it was among the most flourishing settlements in the territory of Iowa. But three years previous to the opening of our story, Gorlon Morris—after whom the settlement was named—came from the East and located there, and in a few weeks five other families followed him.

Though the Indians were at peace at this time, the settlers took every precaution to guard against any sudden outbreak. Their houses were all built closely together, and then a strong stockade was built around them with a block-house in the center. Outside of this stronghold the beautiful prairie was converted into a proper state of cultivation and inclosed by fences of living cottonwoods.

Prosperity and success seemed to attend the settlers in their every effort; but in the enjoyment of their good fortune, they—like their ill-fated predecessors of Fort Mimms—neglected the precaution of guarding against the savages, that at first they were so careful to observe, and finally this neglect proved the downfall of the settlement.

It was on the afternoon of the day following the night of storm that Miss Mattie Morris—Gordon Morris' daughter—mounted upon a beautiful black pony, rode out a short distance from the settlement on the great prairie.

A horseback ride was the daily recreation of Miss Mattie. It had given a healthy glow to her rosy cheeks and a lustrous sparkle to her dark, laughing eyes, and gave her great freshness and sweetuess of nature. She was scarcely eighteen years of age, but, by the loss of her mother when quite young, she became mistress of her father's household, and by this early assumption of care, all those pure and womanly traits of her soul were developed in advance of her age, giving an additional charm to her young life. Mattie's heart was not free. To Walter Gray she had plighted it, but not without the purest and holiest of love.

When the maiden had reached an eminence about a mile from the settlement, she drew rein, and with a small spy-glass swept the prairies that rolled away leagues before her like a green billowy sea.

But nothing save the unbroken expanse met her gaze, and lowering her glass, a cloud of disappointment swept over her fair face as she murmured:

"Oh, dear, dear! Walter is not coming yet; and to-day he was to be at home. Surely, surely, nothing has befallen him!—Hark!"

At this instant her ear caught the sound of clattering hoofs that caused the involuntary exclamation, and before she could turn her head, a horseman dashed up from behind upon a panting and foam-flecked steed, and drew rein at her side.

A paleness suffused her face, and her lips quivered with sudden fear, as she recognized the horseman.

It was Barak McGavitt, the Indian agent.

"A pleasant evening, Miss Morris," said the agent, with a polite bow; "hope my intrusion has not offended you."

"Not at all," replied Mattie; "but has any thing happened that you have been riding so hard?"

"Nothing, Mattie, nothing," returned the agent, assuming a serious look and tone; "but the fact is, I could no longer bear up under the secret that I have longed to tell you."

"I hope it is nothing bad, Mr. McGavitt—nothing but

what I can give you some consolation, since you seem to confide your secret trouble to me," said Mattie, unsuspecting the truth.

"You give me encouragement already, Mattie; but the truth is—I—love you, and have come to ask you to be my wife."

Mattie drew herself up, and seemed changed into a marble statue. Surprise, fear and indignation, all were depicted on her countenance at once. She had never dreamed of such a confession and request from Barak McGavitt—a man old enough to be her father—when, but a few days previous, she had given him an invitation to be at her and Walter Gray's wedding, as soon as her lover returned from the fort. She could look upon it in no other light than an insult, and, with all the haughty fire of her spirit aroused, she replied:

"If that is what brought you here, you may as well go back. No gentleman would have taken such a liberty. You know full well that I am to marry Walter Gray; so you may as well go your way and I will go mine," and as she concluded, she turned her pony's head toward the settlement.

"Then I am to understand that you will *not* marry me?" the Indian agent asked, fixing his eyes fiercely upon Mattie.

"Yes, you are!" she fairly hissed, with bitter scorn.

"Then, by —, you shall *never* marry Walter Gray!" the man exclaimed in a threatening voice, and turning his animal, he dashed away at a furious speed toward the north.

The words of the heartless man startled her. With all the misgivings of some awful fate or vengeance crowding upon her heart, she sat and watched the flying form of the agent until he was lost in the distance: then she returned home, and at night when her father came in she made known her trouble to him.

"I fear, Mattie," her father said, "that you acted rashly with Barak. I do not blame you for refusing to marry him, though I have seen, for some time, that he loved you, but you should have put him off in a friendly way. You should remember, daughter, that to Mr. McGavitt is owing our protection from the cruelties and dangers of the great chief Crimson Hand and his Indian followers.

"Perhaps I acted rashly, father," replied Mattie, "in my re-

fusal, but I fear that you will yet prove the victim of misplaced confidence in this Barak McGivitt; for I firmly believe that if our safety from the Indians is in any way owing to his influence, it has been exerted for some sinister object."

"What makes you think so, Mattie? Have you heardught suspicious of him?"

"No, father, I have not; but I know that he is a man of little principle, else he would never have said to me what he did."

With spirits depressed, and heart ill at ease, the maiden saw the night come, bringing no Walter Gray. But, hopeful, she waited his coming, and seated herself by the little window looking down toward the open gate of the stockade, to wait and watch.

The moon was at its full, and, as it rose up over the eastern horizon, the eyes of the wary maiden descried a dark object moving athwart its blood-red face.

It was near midnight, and Mattie, wearied with watching, rested her head upon the window-sill and sunk into a gentle slumber. She was aroused by a slight noise at the window. Raising her head, she was stricken speechless with terror at the sight that met her gaze. There, within arm's reach, gazing in upon her through the window, stood a stalwart, hideous savage, whose head bristled with feathers of gaudy plumage, and whose face was streaked with vermilion and ocher until he appeared the demon of hideousness. His hands, which he seemed anxious should be seen, looked as though they had been steeped in blood. Mattie knew she was confronted by the terrible chief, Crimson Hand.

With great presence of mind she sprung to her feet and put out the light, and then arousing her father made known to him her discovery.

Mr. Morris arose and dressed himself, and going to the window looked out; but he saw nothing.

"Surely you were mistaken, Mattie, for nothing of any strange can I discover."

Scarcely had the words left his lips when there arose a wild, exultant yell that seemed to come from the throats of a thousand demons.

"Great God!" burst from Morris' lips, "it's too true! too

tree! and curse the folly that allowed the gates of that stockade to remain unbarred for a single night!"

"Can we not reach the block-house, father?" asked Mattie.

"No, no, child, that's impossible; we have got to take our chances in trying to escape from here into the forest."

At this juncture there came a terrible crash against the heavy, unyielding door that caused the whole building to tremble.

"Father! father! we are lost!" cried Mattie.

"Be firm, daughter. The door will hold for a few moments. Let us hurry up in the loft and try to effect our escape from there ere they discover that we are missing from here."

The father seized his rifle, and, followed by his daughter, ascended the ladder into the loft.

Drawing the ladder up after them, Morris put it out at the little window onto the ground.

At this moment the savages burst open the door below and rushed wildly into the darkened room, and began thundering about in search of their victims.

The blood of the settler and his daughter ran cold—not from the terrible thoughts of their home being pillaged by a band of merciless savages, but from hearing a familiar voice among the savages—a voice of stern command, urging the red demons on in their search.

Giving Mattie orders to follow, Morris stepped out upon the ladder and descended to the ground in safety. In a moment more his daughter was at his side.

Those of the savages that were not in the cabin, were busily engaged in their bloody work at the other cabins; consequently, Morris and his daughter succeeded in reaching the foot of the stockade unobserved. Here they paused and looked back. They could plainly hear the death-cries of their friends, who, less fortunate than they, had been aroused by the horrid yell of the savages from their peaceful slumber, to find their homes and their lives at the mercy of the invader.

Morris knew that his friends were beyond human aid, and closing and fastening the gate of the stockade on the outside that the savages might be detained in their egress, father and daughter moved around the stockade to where the horses were

at grass in a small inclosure. In a few moments they reached it, and each having caught and mounted his and her favorite animal, dashed away over the prairie toward the west, with the view of reaching a belt of timber some three miles away.

It required but a few minutes' sharp riding to reach the friendly shelter of the forest, and then they drew rein to consider the course they should pursue.

Glancing back toward the settlement they beheld it wrapped in flames, and a hundred or more dusky forms sitting to an fro within its red glare. They also discovered that the gate of the stockade had been forced open, and a number of savages were rushing out in great excitement, no doubt in search of them.

"They have discovered our escape, father, and are in search of us," said Mattie.

"True, Mattie, and we had better hurry on," replied the father.

"Hurry on!" exclaimed the maiden, in a tone of despair; "where to, father? our home is destroyed, our friends are dead!"

"We can seek safety at the Hunter's Lodge, my child. There we will meet true friends."

The fugitives turned and rode into the forest. The strictest silence was observed. For an hour they rode on through the gloom. Finally Morris stopped the animals and listened, but all was silent as the grave, save that deep and solemn breathing of nature that is always heard in the wilderness. Then he started on, and feeling beyond immediate danger, he broke the silence by asking in an undertone:

"Are you growing tired, my child?"

But there was no response. He asked the question again, and a little louder. Still there was no response. What was the reason? He put out his hand and touched the pony. *Mattie was missing from her pony's back!*"

In the great extremity of his sudden loss and sorrow, the father shouted the name of his daughter aloud, but all in vain. Only the echo of his own voice was borne back to his ears in the solemn stillness of the deep darkness.

## CHAPTER V.

PROFESSOR FITZ HENRY STEBBINS.

So sudden, so silent had Mr. Morris' bereavement fallen upon him, that it seemed as though his heart would break under the terrible calamity. It seemed utterly impossible that Mattie could have been taken from her pony's back by a lurking savage, or dragged off by some drooping bough without giving the alarm. He had heard a slight commotion once in their journey, but so slight as to occasion no uneasiness; but he had no doubt it was then that she had been drawn from her horse.

Dismounting, Morris hitched the animals to a tree and crept back in search of his daughter. It was only by crawling upon his hands and knees, and feeling for the impression of the horses' hoofs in the yielding soil, that he could follow the backward track at all. At each step he would hesitate with terrible fear and suspense, lest the next step his hand would come in contact with the lifeless form of his beloved daughter. Now and then he would call his daughter's name, but his search was fruitless.

Presently the old settler came to a small opening in the forest where the moon's rays looked down in golden splendor. He stopped and listened. A sound fell upon his ears. He started with a sickening feeling of horror. It was the growl of a bear that he had heard, advancing toward him with a low, shuffling tread. He turned to flee, but started back with an involuntary cry of terror as he did so, for he found himself confronted by a tall, grim savage, who held an uplifted tomahawk over his head. The savage was just standing in the edge of the moonlit opening, and Morris could see that a murderous and fiendish leer convulsed his bedaubed and painted features.

Quick as a flash, the old settler sprung to one side, just as the red-skin's tomahawk circled through the air. But, so certain was the latter of his victim, and so great was the im-

petus of the blow, that, missing his mark, the Indian was pitched forward right into the very clutches of the advancing bear, which at once engaged him in deadly conflict; and while thus engaged, Morris made good his escape from both the savage and bear.

Retracing his footsteps, with a heavy heart, to the horses, he unfastened them, and mounting his own and leading the pony, he set off toward the north-west—all hopes of ever seeing his child again banished from his breast. Nevertheless, he determined to hasten to the Hunter's Lodge, hoping there to procure assistance in the search for his child until some tidings were obtained of her—either dead or alive.

The settler's course still lay through the double gloom of the great wood, and it was only a perfect knowledge of the country that enabled him to keep his course without getting bewildered. Well versed in the cunning and craftiness of his red enemies, he ever kept upon the alert, though it was so very dark that he could not see the pony he was leading. Presently he entered a glen of scrubby oaks where the darkness became intense. Suddenly, in passing through this glen, the horse that he was leading became almost unmanageable, rearing and plunging and snorting in an excited manner. Owing to the pitchy gloom he was unable to ascertain the cause of the pony's affright, but, supposing that he had been pierced by a savage arrow, he dashed away in a hasty trot, and in a few moments found himself on the great prairie. The moon was at its full, and as its unobstructed rays fell upon the green, billowy plain, it seemed to the settler like issuing suddenly from darkness into the broad sunlight of day. Turning to look at the pony, he started with sudden terror, for there upon the back of the horse, with an upright, bareback, unconsciously seated, a tall, athletic savage.

A leer of triumph was on the cunning villain's face, and, with one hand he was clinging to the pony's mane, while with the other he clutched the uplifted weapon to brain the settler. Just as he was in the act of dealing the blow, he gave a wild yell, but simultaneous with this act, Morris sprung his pistol, and needlessly, though fortunately, thrust the muzzle squarely into the open mouth of the red-skin, and instinctively pulled the trigger. The tomahawk dropped from the Sioux'

hand, and though the animals dashed away the instant the rifle cracked, the body of the now almost headless savage maintained an upright position for several rods; then the hand that clutched the mane released its hold; the stiffened muscles of the body relaxed; the hands fell limp at the side, the lifeless form tottered, and then fell to the earth.

Breathing a sigh of relief, Morris dashed on further and farther into the solitude of the great plain. After he had traversed a distance which he considered beyond immediate danger, he drew rein to allow the animals to rest, and to note his position.

Far away toward the east, which was growing red with approaching day, and toward the south, rolled the prairies in one continuous and unbroken field of green. To the west and north, a long belt of timber rose up against the clear sky, grim, black, silent. A soft breeze, laden with the perfumes of the wild flowers, floated up from the south and stirred the green grass into gentle billows, and cooled the heated, throbbing temples of the old settler.

To the south lay Morris Settlement; to the north lay the Hunter's Lodge. Toward the latter Morris headed his animals and continued on his journey. It was his intention to keep to the right of the timber upon the prairie until morning, then strike to the north-west through the woods to the lodge.

However, it was not long until the last weary star of night paled away before the broad glare of the open day, and then Morris turned toward the timber. As he entered its outskirts, he came suddenly upon a smoldering camp-fire and a canvas-covered emigrant-wagon, and much to his surprise and wonder, not a living soul was to be seen. But all around were marks of a desperate struggle, and, at one side, lay large Newfoundland dog with his head cloven. Morris rode up to the wagon and looked in. It had been plundered of all its contents, save a few empty boxes, and the white canvas-cover was torn and stained with specks of blood. He looked further and found a small daybook. He opened and read upon the fly-leaf the words: "Jasper Holmes, L—— county, Vermont."

"Gracious God!" exclaimed Morris; "it has been my

friend, Holmes, and his family. Let me see; to-morrow he was to have been at the settlement, but, he and his family have fallen victims to the red fiends; all are lost, lost, lost!"

"Really, my strange friend, you are mistaken," came an unknown voice.

The settler started with surprise, as he saw the figure of a man glide from a large hollow log that lay near by. He was of a small stature, and about five and thirty years of age. His eyes were of a light gray, and his hair, which was quite long, was of a yellow white. His hands were small and white like a female's, and his features fine and effeminate and somewhat bronzed by the sun and wind. He was dressed in white linen pants and vest, and a "swallow-tail" coat of fine blue cloth, with a double row of brass buttons upon each side in front. His feet were incased in a pair of ornamental cloth pumps, and his head was surmounted by a jaunty little lacquered straw hat; while, to add to his snobby appearance, a double eye-glass was perched upon his nose, and secured from falling by means of a string attached to a vest-button. Altogether, there was an air of self importance and pride in the stranger that greatly impressed the old settler, for such a person was in strange contrast with the strong, rough men usually met with upon the frontier.

"And whom have I the honor of addressing?" asked Morris, as the stranger drew himself up before him.

"Professor Fitz Henry Stebbins, at your service," the man replied, with a flourish of the hands.

"I am happy to meet you, Mr. Stebbins, though it is under rather trying circumstances," said Morris, dismounting and shaking the man warmly by the hand. "If I mistake not this wagon belongs to Jasper Holmes."

"Truly, it does; and a very unfortunate accident befell him last night," replied Stebbins.

"He fell a victim to the Indians, I suppose."

"That he did, though many a red-man bit the dust, ere we were compelled to succumb to overwhelming odds."

"Were you one of Mr. Holmes' party?"

"I was. By the loving solicitations of Miss Ida Holmes—to whom, I may as well inform you right here, I am engaged to be married—I concluded to accompany them to the Far

West; though it was with much regret that I yielded up my professorship in the University of Vermont. However, I concluded that I could come West, and were I not selected for some political post of honor—for instance the Gubernatorial chair of the promising young territory—I would build a college and in this way carve out fame and fortune—the reward of genius."

Morris at once became disgusted with the self-importance and egotism of the man, but, still anxious to learn the fate of his friends, and in hopes of bringing the dandy briefly to the point, he asked:

"How does it come that the Indians did not get you?"

"Verily, it comes of indomitable courage and endurance," the professor replied, drawing himself up with much importance and pomposity. "You see, we went into camp here, last night, and after supper had been dispatched, we seated ourselves about the fire and were engaged in conversation, when suddenly a wild hurrrah rent the air, and a score of those dusky fellows called Indians, came walking quite briskly into camp. Ida, who was sitting by my side at the time, uttered a little cry at sight of the rude fellows and clung to me for protection. Placing one arm around her waist, I arose to my feet and peremptorily ordered the vagabonds to leave. But they did not obey, so I repeated the order quite emphatically, and still they did not obey; then my anger arose, and, seizing their captain, I deliberately booted him out of the camp; but, while thus engaged, Chenny Fleet, our Irish teamster, ran away like a coward; the other Indians attacked Mr. Holmes and then a general engagement ensued. I seized an ax, and never did the great Cesar de Leon swing his battle-ax with more deadly effect; but the odds were too great, and poor, dear Ida, and her parents were carried away prisoners, and I alone was left to contend with six of the horrid red-men; but, as Fortune would have it, I succeeded in routing them with great loss, and then, overcome with exhaustion and excitement, I crept into the log and—and fainted, and not until I heard your voice did I awake."

"Really, you have had a desperate time," said Morris, though he doubted the truth of the story very much.

"Yes, my friend; verily, it was a terrible hour—one in

which all my bright prospects of the future were dashed to the earth. But, then, it is only a first punishment of my spirit of adventure; for, had I remained in Vermont, among peace and plen'y, I might have been lecturing to an audience last night on Ancient or Modern Rome, or the Middle Ages, instead of fighting the aborigines of the primeval forests of America. In fact, my friends warned me of the dangers and hardships of the great West; but, unshaken in my love for Miss Ida and the wild romance of the prairie, I heeded not their warnings, although I was well aware of the warlike habits of the dusky red-men, having written a book a few years since entitled, 'The American Aborigines: their Place in Civilization'; so you see that I have some knowledge of the Indian."

"What do you propose doing now?" asked Morris.

"Well, sir, I propose to hasten to Morris Settlement, raise a company of volunteers, place myself at their head as commander, and start to the rescue of my friends. I will give those red-men a chastising that they will never forget, for my knowledge of military tactics, and the science of war in general, is not so limited, I would have you to know."

"But I would have you know that you will obtain no help from Morris Settlement, for the place was destroyed by Indians last night, and all the settlers murdered but myself and daughter, and for all I know, even now my daughter is either dead, or what is worse, an Indian captive. This is how the matter stands. I am Gordon Morris."

"Oh, Lord! you don't say!" exclaimed Stebbins, his features convulsed with sudden fear. "Oh, that I had remained among peace and plenty in Vermont, and had not been a love-sick fool and permitted myself to be coaxed away by the whims of a girl! Verily, I am glad to know you are Gordon Morris, and hope you can advise me as to how I shall proceed."

"Well, the first thing you should look after your friends, and, if you are not able to rescue them, try and get assistance," said Morris. "As I am now in search of my daughter, you can ride this pony, and by throwing our force together, probably we can aid our friends."

"Really, friend Morris, your proposition is a very fair one,

though, I must say, I detest horseback riding. It is healthy exercise, I admit, but I would prefer a carriage if it could be readily obtained."

"Well, let me inform you, Stebbins—"

"Professor Stebbins, if you please," interrupted the Vermonter; but Morris paid no attention to his correction, and continued:

"Let me inform you that carriages are unknown to this country, and if a man does not wish to travel on horseback he always walks."

"Well, I believe I will ride, then, on your pony, and though I have ridden but few times on horseback, I believe that the philosophical knowledge I possess of the laws that govern the equilibrium of moving bodies would enable me to ride with the ease and grace of a skillful equestrian."

"Then unless you mount this pony at once," said Morris, springing upon his horse, "and get away from here, your evasive powers will be called into exercise again, for, if you look through the shrubbery there, you will see a number of Indians out upon the prairie, riding briskly in this direction."

The learned gentleman did not look to ascertain whether the settler's warning was true or not, but, hurrying up to the pony, he threw himself astride of its back, and, with his legs drawn up, his body almost bent double, and holding onto the animal's mane with both hands, he dashed away at the side of the old settler.

Despite the seriousness of their situation, Morris could not restrain smiling at the ludicrous figure presented by the "professor," who was a long time getting himself fully balanced upon the animal's back, whether by the laws that govern the equilibrium of moving bodies or not.

It was not long, however, before they had put a considerable distance between themselves and the Indians that Morris could safely stop up on the prairie; and then they reined their animals down to a walk.

"Ah, me!" groaned the professor, after a prolonged silence, "this is a horrible situation for a man of my standing. It is a downright waste of time and genius, and the prospects of a college in this heathen land have been blown to the four

quarters, and I might as well say, farewell Fame, farewell Fortune. But, were I so inclined, I could take my rifle and hunting-knife, and, in a year's time, make my name a terror to every savage in the land, and have my deeds of daring praised in song and recorded in history; for Mr. L——, the eminent Vermont phrenologist, has often told me that I possessed the finest and best-developed anatomical organization that he had ever beheld. Combativeness, Caution and Constructiveness, he said, with me were fully developed as they were in the heads of such men as George Washington and Oliver Cromwell. But, when I think of my betrothed, Miss Ida, being a captive, my heart almost breaks with sorrow, and I wish that I was in her place. Poor Ida! poor Ida!" and in his assumed sorrow he drew from his pocket a large silk handkerchief and placed it to his eyes. But in doing so, he lost his balance and rolled heavily to the ground.

This was a sad mishap, for, ere the professor could regain the animal's back, a wild, savage war-whoop awoke the silent echoes of the forest, and a number of savages rushed from their covert toward them.

"Mount, quick, and fly, for God's sake!" exclaimed Morris, excitedly; "mount, I say, before it is too late!"

"Oh, Lord! I can't! Help! help!" replied Stebbins, fixed to the spot with terror.

Morris saw that the fellow was an unmitigated coward, and, not wishing to place his own life in jeopardy, when a chance for escape was open, and when Stebbins would not move a muscle to help himself, he put spurs to his horse and galloped away, the riderless pony following close behind.

Alas! Professor Fitz Henry Stebbins was at the mercy of the "American Aborigines!"

## CHAPTER VI.

## ROBBERS' DEEDS AND ROBBERS' VENGEANCE.

AGAIN I change the scene of my story in order to introduce a new character.

On the morning following the night of the terrible storm, a young man, mounted upon a travel-worn animal, was threading his way through the forest, several miles north of the Hunter's Lodge.

He was about five and twenty years of age, finely built, with a handsome face and intelligent expression. He was dressed in an uncouth garb of buck-skin, and carried a brace of pistols and a long rifle. Few persons who had ever seen Oscar Preston two years previous, would have recognized him, in the brown, bearded face of this young man; nevertheless, it was Oscar Preston, who, after two years' absence, was now on his return to his friends living in Morris Settlement.

Young Preston was the foster-brother of Walter Gray—his own parents being dead. Together they had grown up from boyhood, loving each other as though the same blood coursed through their veins. But, they had parted when each struck out in the great world for himself.

On the evening of the day on which we introduce him to the reader, Oscar hoped to be at the settlement, and it was with many happy thoughts that he rode on through the silent woods, drinking in the freshness of nature that was spread before him, in the green-robed trees, the flower-decked glades, the murmuring brooks, the caroling birds and the chattering squirrels.

But, suddenly, the young man was startled from his day-dream. In passing through a dense thicket, he came into a small opening; just then two rough, burly men sprung from the shrubbery and confronted him. A single glance was sufficient to convince Oscar that the men were outlaws. In a moment his hand dropped to his belt, but before he could

draw his revolver, a third robber crept up behind and dealt him a blow upon the head that felled him unconscious to the ground.

When his senses returned he found himself sitting upon the ground in the little glade where he had fallen. The robbers were gone, and, a few steps away his horse was browsing among the shrubbery. At his side lay his saddle-bags; but alas! they were empty; his little fortune was gone!

Oscar sprung to his feet—a mingled expression of revenge and disappointment sweeping across his face. All the fruits of his toils were gone—all his bright hopes of the future had vanished. Remounting his horse, he resumed his journey; though with an empty purse and a somewhat sore head, yet with a soul as undaunted as ever.

His thoughts now, as he rode on, were any thing but pleasant, and every thing seemed gayer and happier than ever, as if to mock his wretchedness of spirit and taunt him in his poverty. Thus several miles had been traversed in bitter reflection, when, suddenly the sound of a human voice reached his ears, and aroused him from his reverie. He stopped and listened, and heard a voice call out:

"Oscar Preston, for God's sake help me!"

Oscar recognized the imploring voice, and springing from his saddle he ran to where the voice emanated. There a horrible sight met his view. In under the weight of a great limb that had been torn from the parent tree lay five human beings—some crushed and mangled, others bruised and bloody, and all dead save one, and he, Oscar Preston recognized as his foster-brother, Walter Gray.

"Oh, God! Walter," exclaimed Oscar, "what means this?"

"Release me and I will tell you; this limb is crushing my bones," replied Walter, in a feeble tone.

With a mighty effort Oscar succeeded in removing the limb and releasing his friend. Fortunately no bones were broken, but he was fearfully bruised and his lower limbs so paralyzed that he could not stand. But, by vigorous rubbing and chafing, the circulation was again started, and soon Walter Gray found himself upon his feet once more, but in relating his adventures to Oscar, he told him that he had never expected to survive the tortures of that terrible night.

It required but a few moments for Walter to narrate his adventures from the time of leaving the fort up to the moment of their meeting, and then in turn, Oscar gave a full account of his perils and trials, touching very briefly and velemtly upon his recent loss by the robbers.

"Well," said Walter, smiling, "since our lives have been spared and almost similar adventures have thrown us together, I suppose we will have the pleasure of each other's company to the settlement."

"I hope so," replied Oscar, "and, as it is quite late, we had better be off and continue our conversation as we proceed."

"That is true," said Walter, "and I will look after my horse at once."

So saying, Walter turned and walked away. In a few moments he returned, mounted upon his animal, having found it where he had left it, but much to his surprise, Burt Orson's horse and saddle were both missing!

In a few moments the young men were moving away through the forest, having armed themselves with the weapons of the slain Indians.

"Have you ever heard, Walter, of a band of robbers infesting this country?"

"Yes; for some time it has been known that a band of robbers have their dens somewhere in the vicinity of Morris Settlement, but the most diligent searching has failed in finding them out. At one time we had all the hunters of the Hunter's Lodge hunting through the forest; while, at the very same time, several emigrant-wagons had been plundered and robbed almost under our very noses. I tell you they are a daring set of fellows as well as troublesome; and it was to procure assistance to continue the search for them that took me to Fort Des Moines. Of course, you must know that there is a regular organized chain of robber lairs extending from the Wahpeton country to the Missouri. They have their stations at every few miles apart, with relay posts for messengers to carry word from one rendezvous to another. So you see it might have been known by some one connected with these outlaws that you possessed considerable gold, and the word communicated all along the

line to this place; but hulloa! here we are, entering the Ghostly Glen!"

This exclamation was caused by the young men riding suddenly into a deep and narrow glen, where high, rugged bluffs rose up on either side, and where the tall trees mingled their boughs and foliage so closely and so densely, that nearly every ray of light was excluded from the narrow vale. A damp, chilly air pervaded the place, similar to that of a subterranean vault, and the echo of the horses' hoofs seemed hollow and sepulchral. The wind whispered low and ghost-like among the branches, and swayed them to and fro, now and then parting them until a patch of light would flash down in the dark vale like a white-robed figure, then instantly fade from view as the branches overhead closed. Many superstitious persons, in passing through the glen, had seen those patches of sunlight flashing here and there, and had declared that they were white-robed spirits flitting about; hence the name that had been given it—Ghostly Glen.

"I declare!" exclaimed Oscar, as they proceeded slowly down the glen, "this place is a ghostly glen, sure enough. It is rightly named."

"Yes, it is a gloomy place," replied Walter, "and there is a dark legend connected with it, and it is to-day shunned as the abode of spirits and ghosts, but I have never yet seen any thing that would arouse one's curiosity here, and I have had occasion to pass through here many—"

"Look there!" suddenly exclaimed Preston, in a voice faintly agitated, pointing away in advance of them.

"What?" exclaimed Walter, looking in the direction indicated.

But no explanation was needed; for there, not ten steps in advance of them, a man with hands tied behind his back and his eyes blindfolded, was hanging in mid-air to a limb by means of a rope, one end of which encircled his neck, while the other was fastened to the bough.

"Great Heaven, Preston! somebody has been foully dealt with."

"Yes, no doubt by the very scoundrels that robbed me," replied Oscar.

"But look! that man is not dead yet!"

True, there was an agitated motion of the body, and springing from their animals, they hastened forward, and while one held the body, the other cut the rope. The unfortunate man was totally unconscious, but the young men soon found that life was not entirely extinct, and, as they also found that the vertebrae of the neck were not dislocated, they set eagerly to work to restore the vital spark that remained.

Tearing open the bosom of his shirt, and stripping the clothes from his limbs, they began chafing his breast and temples and legs vigorously. Their labor was soon rewarded. The strange unfortunate commenced a labored respiration, and soon he opened his eyes and stared wildly about him.

"You are safe, my strange friend," said Walter.

Had he received a severe shock of electricity, the stranger could not have started more violently than he did at sound of Walter's voice. He rose quickly to a sitting posture, and looking Walter fairly in the face, articulated in a faint, gasping voice :

"Where—are—they?"

"Who?" asked Walter.

"The—the—robbers."

"I know not. We found you hanging here, and cut down and restored you to life, or rather, consciousness."

"And to whom am I indebted for my life?" the stranger asked, beginning to breathe quite easily.

"Oscar Preston and Walter Gray rescued you from the latter," replied Walter Gray.

"Walter Gray!" exclaimed the man, in much surprise. "Has Walter Gray escaped from the power of the savages?"

"Yes," replied Walter, much surprised by the man's question; "what do you know of my being in the power of the red-skins?"

"I know much," replied the man; "and since you have saved my life, I will tell you, though it is a dark story—one that will startle you, young man, with surprise and wonder."

"Let us hear it at once; but first, give us your name," said Oscar.

"My name is Seneca Bain—for short, Sin Bain, and for the last two years have been one of the company that makes its head-quarters at the Hunter's Lodge. But let me ask you,

Walter Gray, do you know that the hunters of the Hunter's Lodge are a band of notorious robbers?"

" You are jesting, Bain!" exclaimed Walter, starting with surprise.

" As God is my witness, I am not."

" Then you are a robber; also." . . .

" Not now, but I have been; but, thank Heaven, I have never shed a drop of innocent blood; and it was for refusing to assist in robbing a young man that was to be at Morris' Settlement to-day, that I was brought here and hung by my companions."

Oscar was well convinced that he himself was the person who had thus been singled out by the robbers, and told Bain as much.

" And the Hunter's Lodge is a den of robbers?" Walter asked, thoughtfully.

" Yes, Gray, it is; but if God spares me I shall bring a just punishment upon every devil of them for the cruelty I have received at their hands. In the first place, I was forced into the band, and of course, under the circumstances, made a very reluctant robber, and when I refused to stain my hands with innocent blood, I was brought out here and hung for fear that I would desert and blow on the lodge. And now, if I am a 'scape-gallows,' I intend to lead a different life and try and atone for my crimes, God willing; and, young man, if you feel safe in working with me, your gold shall be recovered."

" Under the circumstances I doubt not your sincerity, and will be thankful for your assistance," said Walter, hopefully. . . .

" But I have not finished the story begun," said the ex-robber. " For a long time it has been known that Bark McGavitt, the Indian agent, makes his head-quarters at the Hunter's Lodge, but none but the robbers themselves know that he is the *captain of their band!*"

" Heavens! you astound me, Bain!" exclaimed Walter.

" I presume so," replied the ex-robber, " but you will be more astounded than ever when I tell you how I learned that you were in the power of the Indians."

" Let us hear it," exclaimed the young man.

"Well, for a long time, Barak McGavitt has been desperately enamored by the charms of Miss Mattie Morris, but you, Mr. Gray, have been in his way to a successful suit, and he determined to get you in his power or out of the way, and then he would compel Miss Morris to be his wife—"

"The infernal devil!" exclaimed Oscar Preston.

"And to accomplish his purpose," Bain continued, "he disguised himself as a hunter, when he learned that you had gone to the fort, and under the name of—"

"Burt Orson?" exclaimed Walter, impatiently.

"Yes; under the name of Burt Orson he sought your company under pretense of journeying to the Hunter's Lodge, and when you had gone into camp last night, he went out, pretending to re-muster, and met four of his savage allies, that had followed in sight from the moment that you set out together, and having removed his hunting-shirt and had it perforated with a bullet and then stained with the blood of an animal, and then placed upon one of the savages in order to deceive you further, he then sent the savages to capture you, while he crept around to the left, and saddling his horse, came directly to the Lodge through the beating storm; and all that I have told you, Captain Barak McGavitt told to his men in the Secret Chamber."

"The Secret Chamber—what is that?" asked Walter.

"It is a concealed underground apartment of the Hunter's Lodge, where the robbers hold their secret meetings and hide their booty. No one outside of that lodge, or ranch, can enter the secret room without being examined in all the signs and passwords known to the chain of robber bands which extend from the northern lakes to the Missouri. I tell you, there is a more perfect system and better understanding between these robber bands than exist between the detective force that is trying to bring them to justice. And now, I have but one secret more to reveal, and that is, the great chief, Chicasa Hawk, who is making the forest and prairies red with innocent blood, is none other than Barak McGavitt, Indian agent and robber captain."

"More to be avenged! Barak McGavitt leading to death and carnage the red marauders of the plain, with whom his government employ him to treat and keep in peace! He is a

a traitor and an inhuman devil?" said Walter, as indignation and revenge swept across his face.

"Where is this villain?" asked Oscar.

"He left the lodge last night for Morris Settlement to continue his nefarious work—supposing that Walter was a prisoner on his way to the Indian village."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, let us not tarry here, for our assistance may be needed at the settlement. I hope that we can consider you as one of our party, Bain, for you will be a great 'help,'" said Walter..

"With all my heart I will go with you, and stand by you until the last moment," replied Bain, rising to his feet.

In a few moments the trio were moving away from the Ghostly Glen, though they had now changed their course so as to leave the Hunter's Lodge a few miles to the west.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### A PRISONER, AND NOT A PRISONER.

There was not a doubt in Silent Shot's mind but that the voice he had had heard was that of a female in distress; and with his dog at his heels, he glided through the shrubbery in the direction of the sound. He had gone but a few rods when Harmony shot past him and dashed away in the brush.

The scout stopped and listened. He heard his dog crashing through the bushes; then a fierce growl, a low scream, followed by the sound of a desperate struggle; then all became silent again, and in a moment more the dog came bounding back in an excited manner.

The scout spoke to the animal; he saw that there was blood upon his mouth and blood upon his breast. He knew that something or some one had been engaged with him.

Following the dog, he soon emerged into a small, moonlit glade. He paused and gazed around him. On either side of the glade he saw a prostrate form. He advanced and bent

over the one at the right, and found it to be a powerful Indian; but he was dead—his throat fearfully, horribly lacerated, with the warm blood still welling from the wound. He turned and walked to the other figure, and found it to be that of a young and beautiful white girl. Her pale face was upturned in the bright moonlight, and the scout recognized the features to be those of Mattie Morris. Was she dead?

The scout stopped and laid his hand upon her breast. There was a perceptible beating of the heart, and with a cry of joy he held the insensible form in his strong arms and carried it back to the glowing camp-fire, and laid it tenderly upon a couch of dry leaves that the wind had whirled into a heap.

Silent Shot had seen people in such a state of unconsciousness before. Water he knew was the best restorative. Not far away, he knew where a spring gurgled from the hill-side. Tidier he beat his footsteps hastily—to bring the cooling liquid in his leather cap.

But scarcely had the scout and his dog, which he had in his excitement neglected to order to guard the unconscious girl, disappeared on the opposite side of the camp-fire than the shrubbery upon the other side was parted, and an Indian woman stepped into the circle of light. It was the beautiful Summer Cloud, the same who had startled the scout the day before, when concealed in the shrubbery on the river-bank—the wife of the noble and handsome chief, Okaledah.

Advancing as shy as the plover, the beautiful Indian bent over Mattie, and for a few moments gazed steadily into her pale face. Then she drew forth a small, silver flask and poured a few drops of the contents between her slightly-patted brows. Next she poured a few drops of the liquid in the palm of her hand and anointed the brow and temples of the unconscious girl.

The effect was magical. Mattie opened her eyes and gazed about her in bewilderment, and faintly asked:

"Where am I?"

"You are safe, pretty maiden," replied Summer Cloud, in a soft, encouraging voice; "but you must rest easy, for your strength and mind are already overtaxed. Silent Shot rescued you."

The sound of footsteps fell upon Summer Cloud's ears, and raising her eyes she beheld Silent Shot standing a few steps away, regarding her with silent surprise. She arose to her feet, and stepping back to where she was partly screened by the shadow of a bush, she said, pointing toward Mattie:

"Watch her close. Danger lurks in every shadow," and turning, she glided away into the gloom of the forest, like a spectral being.

"Who is she?" the scout mentally asked, knitting his brows in reflection. "Ah! I know; she is the wife of the great chief Okalealah. I saw them yesterday upon the beach by the river, but there is something strange about her actions."

Mattie lifted her eyes and saw the scout standing near her.

"To you I owe my life," she said, breaking the profound silence.

Silent Shot started as though he had not been aware of her presence.

"I rescued you from the red-skins, Miss Morris, but that Injin gal merits the credit o' restorin' you to consciousness. She is a curious critter, Miss Morris, a curious critter. And now do you feel strong enough to tell me as how you come to be out here in the power o' the red-skins?"

"Oh, sir!" she exclaimed, as her memory recalled the past, "something terrible has happened. The Indians have destroyed the settlement and murdered all the settlers. Only father and I escaped, and while we were riding through the forest on horseback, a heavy blanket was thrown suddenly over my head, and then I was dragged from my animal's back and carried away in a pair of strong arms. I attempted to cry out, but the heavy blanket prevented me. I was carried a long ways, then the blanket was removed from my head; but I was almost suffocated, and it was a long time before I could breathe freely. Then I cried out at the top of my lungs for help. Presently the Indian placed me upon my feet, and told me I must walk. We were standing then in the edge of a little moonlit glade. The next instant I saw a dark form spring from the bushes and drag the savage to the earth. I turned to flee, and had nearly crossed the glade when I fell to the ground; then I knew no more until I awoke here. And oh, my poor, dear father! where is he?"

and the maiden burst into tears and wept as though her heart would break with grief.

"There is not a doubt, Miss Mattie, but that your father is safe. Cheer up, and to-morrow we will find him," said the scout, consolingly. "It is almost daylight, now, so we will not be here long. You had better lay down and sleep till daylight, and rest yourself for to-morrow's journey."

"No, no, I could not sleep—I would rather not," replied Mattie.

"Very well; it's just as you feel, Miss Morris," and the scout stirred up the fire and put on more fuel, then seated himself, and entered into a general conversation with his companion.

Slowly the night wore away and morning dawned clear and bright. Silent Shot roasted a slice of venison and divided it with his fair charge. Both ate it with a good appetite, and felt much refreshed for the journey that was before them. Harmony was not forgotten in his share of the meal.

Shortly after sunrise they set off through the forest in a north-easterly direction. Their course lay through a thickly wooded portion of the forest, consequently their progress was slow and tedious.

Harmony was continually on the scout in advance and at either side of his master and the maiden, therefore they felt no fears of running into the clutches of the red-skins unawares.

But after they had journeyed some distance, the sagacious brute began to grow uneasy, and show signs that convinced his master that hidden danger was near. The dog made a thorough search of all the adjacent points where an enemy could have possibly been concealed, and finally stopped at a large tree and began sniffing the ground in a curious manner. His master advanced to find a large pool of fresh blood upon the ground, but could find no care as to how it came there, but after some thought a startling discovery disclosed in his mind. The blood had undoubtedly been put there by some human agency—no doubt by the red-skins who knew of the whites' approach—for the express purpose of deadening the sense of the dog, thus removing all obstacles from the trap set to catch our friends.

The scout called the animal away from the blood, and sent

him off into the forest, but he would frisk about as if searching for a lost trail, then invariably work around to the crimson pool, where he would remain until called away again.

"I'm afraid my dog will be o' little service till I git him away from this place," said the scout, with an ominous shake of the head.

"Why not?" asked Mattie.

"Because, the smell o' that fresh blood 'll tetotally kill his scent while we're in this neighborhood ; so the sooner we get away from here the better it 'll be fur us."

Our friends moved on, though with much uneasiness, for true enough, the dog upon which they placed so much dependence, followed at their heels and could not be induced to leave them. Half a mile more had been traversed, when, despite the caution of the scout, they entered the trap so ingeniously and cunningly set.

In passing through a dense copse, fully fifty savages in war-paint arose around them like so many evil spirits conjured up from the earth.

Silent Shot, seeing the folly of resistance, peaceably threw down his bow in token of submission. In a moment the yelling, jeering savages had crowded around their captive--wild in their triumph and success in capturing the terrible Silent Shot upon whose scalp a great reward was set.

Though Harmony had been cleverly tricked, he was not to be caught a second time by the red-skins, and the moment the red-skins began to close in upon his master, he sprung forward, and, seizing a red-skin by the throat, cut the weasand of the said red-skin in a twinkling ; then, with a yelp, he broke through the circle of enraged demons and escaped into the forest, much to the joy of his master and the dismay of the savages.

Though the scout was a prisoner, Mattie felt, despite her situation, a comparative safeness in the presence of the brave captive ; though he were powerless to help her, she clung to his arm, her pale lips tremulous with emotion, and her eyes upturned to his in silent appeal for the protection he was unable to render. Had he been alone, the scout would not have hesitated to have attempted his escape, but it was not in his noble heart to desert his fair charge ; but in giving himself

up without resistance, he hoped thereby to court the mercies of the savages, and then watch his opportunity for effecting his and Matie's escape, without incurring dangerous risk.

But all his hopes were suddenly crushed. The savages separated into two parties and moved off in opposite directions, each party taking one of the captives. Silent Shot was conducted a short distance through the forest until they came to where a number of ponies were hitched. His hands were now tied behind his back, and then he was mounted upon one of the ponies. To prevent his escaping from its back, his feet were fastened together by means of a cord passing from one foot to the other under the animal's belly. He felt that there were little hopes of escape.

After some parley, the savages mounted their animals, and in single file set off through the forest to conduct the prisoner to the village of the great chief, Crimson Hand, there to be given up to public torture, for the Indians were fierce for vengeance upon the terrible Silent Shot; though when he was captured they treated him with the respect with which the American Indian usually regards a brave and daring enemy.

Silent Shot was placed about the middle of the cavalcade, and his pony led by the preceding Sioux.

The savages halted not for dinner, but kept steadily on until sunset, then they halted beneath the wide-arching boughs of a giant elm, to encamp for the night.

Silent Shot was taken from his animal's back and tied to a sapling, rear, and a guard stationed over him. The ponies were tied out to browse among the shrubbery, and then a large fire was made, and venison and bear's meat spitted around it to roast. When it was done the scout's hands were released, though not until his feet and limbs were doubly bound; and some of the food given him, which he ate with good relish and an appetite sharpened by long fasting; in the mean time he kept close watch, hopeful that he would catch the savages off their guard, draw from the secret pocket of his skirt a still concealed knife, cut his bonds and escape into the forest while his hands were unfettered.

The savages seated themselves around the glowing fire and partook of their supper in silence; but there was not a moment passed that some of their eyes were not upon the scout,

to whose disappointment, after they had finished their supper, rebound his hands then resumed their places around the fire, and producing their tomahawk-pipes commenced smoking.

The moments stole on in silence. The fire burned low, and threw a sickly, lurid light over the dusky, stolid faces of the savages, who sat puffing whiffs of smoke from their nostrils, until the surrounding atmosphere was heavy with the blue, obnoxious exhalation. All around was a death-like silence, broken only by the low and continued moan of the deep, dark wilderness. Overhead and on each side beyond the radius of light, the night was purple in its gloom.

The Indians were unusually silent under the circumstances. Yet from the demoniac leer that would occasionally flit across the dusky faces, and the triumphant look that flashed ever anon upon their captive, it was quite evident that they were as silent in their triumph as they had been boisterous a few hours before.

But hark! That awful silence was suddenly broken. Clear and loud as the clarion notes of a bugle, rung a savage war-whoop—the war-whoop of a single Arapahoe—the deadly and implacable enemy of the Sioux.

In an instant the savages started to their feet in the wildest confusion, the word: "Okalealah! Okalealah!" passing from lip to lip.

They had recognized the war-whoop of Okalealah, the powerful chief of the Arapahoes, who for years, next to the whites, had been their most deadly enemy.

Expecting a terrible onset from their enemies, the cunning Sioux determined not to be shot down by the light of the own camp-fire, and seizing half a dozen of their thick woolen blankets, they spread them over the glowing embers, thus wrapping themselves in almost an impenetrable darkness.

At this instant, the small figure of a human being glided, or rather floated out from behind the great elm, advanced to where Silent Shot was bound, and in an instant severed his bonds. Then stooping, the figure whispered in the scout's ear:

"Flee! flee for your life, Richard Ellmore!"

The scout started up as though he had been stung by a viper—clutched at the mysterious figure, but alas! it had faded back into the forest gloom from whence it came.

The savages, on going in' o camp, had placed the quiver and unstring bow of Silent Shot at the foot of the great elm. Thence he groped his way, and procuring his weapons, dashed off into the forest just as the stifled flames of the camp fire burst through their charred woolen cover, and lit up the surrounding gloom with the glare of the mid-day sun.

A yell of barded triumph burst from the savages' lips when they discovered that Silent Shot was gone, and, like so many bloodhounds, they dashed away in vain pursuit.

Silent Shot felt no fears, but continued his flight for some distance. Then he halted, and with the words, "Flee, flee for your life, Richard Ellmore," still ringing in his ears like a voice from the grave, he closed his eyes and pressed his brow as if to aid in the elucidation of the mystery which baffled him.

The quick patter of feet suddenly aroused the scout; and soon Harmony was leaping and capering upon him in the greatest excitement and delight at thus meeting his master.

"Here ye are—safe ag'in, Harmony, ole boy," the scout said, caressing his dog. "A wild, ventersome life is ours. One night tossin' on the angry waves o' a mighty river, driftin' on the wings o' an awful storm, walkin' among the clouds; another night a captive, with the grave whisperin' in my ear, r callin' all those days of joy, those bygone—but it fiddiesicks! ole boy, what's the use talkin'? The past is gone an'!—well, we might as well be gone too, fur thar's the gal to receive yit to-night—but oh, God! that voice! that mystery! that face, that angelic face, looking up from the grave!—ye, fool that I am, b'eatin' away here like a last sick—c'mere, Harmony, ole dog, let's b' trampin'."

So saying, the scout and his dog glided away through the shrubbery. By a circuitous route he reached the trail along which he had been conducted by the savages, and at once set off to retrace the distance, for in order to follow up the savages who had carried Mettie away, he would be compelled to go back to the point where they were separated. But after due reflection he concluded to leave the trail and strike due west, knowing that the savages would conduct the maiden to the Indian village as speedily as possible, and he

hoped, thereby, to intercept them by getting in between them and the village; so he at once changed his course and hurried on.

Several miles had been traversed when, suddenly, he came to a halt. In gaining a slight eminence a bright camp-fire flashed on his view, down in the valley before him. Quickly dropping upon his hands and knees he began crawling toward the camp that was wild with Indian revelry.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### FRIENDS MEET.

GORDON MORRIS, riding briskly on until he was beyond reach of the savages, reined in his animal to a walk. He was now about ten miles from the Hunter's Lodge, which he hoped to reach before noon. He soon forgot the unfortunate professor and the danger that surrounded himself in studying out the plan for the work that was before him. While thus engaged, and on rounding the base of an abrupt bluff or wooded point, he came suddenly face to face with Walter Gray, Oscar Preston and the ex-robber, Sin Bain—the two former on horseback, the latter on foot.

"Gordon Morris!" exclaimed Walter and Oscar in a breath.

"The same, my young friends," returned Morris, "but you were the last persons I ever dreamed of meeting here. You seem travel worn and excited."

"And you, Mr. Morris," said Walter, "wear the unmistakable evidence of trouble. Why are you here—what has happened at the settlement?"

"Alas, Walter! the settlement was attacked last night by the savages under Crimson Hand and all but my daughter and I perished."

"Oh, God!" groaned the young men in the deepest agony.

For a few moments a deep silence prevailed. The young men had dismounted, and giving way to their sudden sor-

sorrow, clasped their arms about each other's necks and sobbed like children. Their sorrow was mutual. Oscar felt the pang as bitterly as Walter. All their bright hopes and anticipations, all their friends had been torn from their hearts.

After a while they recovered from the terrible shock. Then each one related his adventures of the last forty-eight hours, and when Morris had heard that of Sin Bain, he could scarcely bring himself to believe the story of the robbers' den and the fiendish conduct of McGavitt. But when he finally did, he saw how truthful had been the words and auspicious of his daughter the previous night; and he felt angry at himself, for thus allowing himself to be made the victim of misplaced confidence, when to other minds less thoughtful the crimes of the renegade seemed so clear.

"Well," said Walter, after their situation had been thoroughly discussed, "since there is nothing at Morris Settlement that claims our presence there, what is to be done?"

"Why, of course the first and most urgent duty required at our hands is the rescue of Miss Morris and our old friend Holmes and his family," replied Oscar.

"True, we're of sufficient number," said Bain, the ex-robber, "to harass the Indians considerably, and should we succeed in overhauling those with the captives before they reach their stronghold, we will have no difficulty in rescuing them. One thing that will aid us is through my influence with the Indians, for all of the robbers of the Hunter's Lodge are on good terms with the Indians."

"Then Mr. Morris has nothing to do but command us and we will work," said young Preston.

"Well, you can catch that pony and ride it," said Morris, turning to Bain, "and then we will all be mounted. In all probability the captives have been carried to the Sioux village, and in order to facilitate our pursuit, we had better go back to that point where Holmes and his family were captured and there take the trail and follow it up."

The ex-robber caught the pony, and mounting it, said:

"Lead the way, Mr. Morris; we are ready."

The four-wheeled wagon had gone eastward, Morris and Preston riding before, and Walter and the ex-robber bo-

hind. They rode on as briskly as the rough condition of the country would permit, but it was high noon before they reached the deserted emigrant-wagon. Halting for a few moments to allow their animals to rest and graze, they procured a couple of fat prairie hens, dressed and roasted them over a slow fire, and made a hearty and sumptuous dinner thereto. After dinner was over they sought the trail of the savages and set off to follow it.

The savages had taken every precaution to hide their trail, and but for the hoofprints of the emigrants' horses in the yielding soil, they would have succeeded, for their own footmarks were effectually concealed. But Gordon Morris and Sin Bain were experienced woodsmen, and the latter had been conspicuous among the robbers as a trailer, consequently they found but little trouble or delay in following the red-skins; and, as the savages had journeyed through such parts as were accessible by the captives' horses, our friends had no difficulty in holding the trail during daylight, but when night finally came on they were compelled to dismount and lead.

The moon was up in all its brilliancy, but the thick foliage of the forest shut out its rays, and it was only by taking turns and crawling upon their hands and knees that they could follow the trail at all, by feeling for the impressions of the horses' feet to guide them. But this was a slow and toilsome job. Half the night or more had been spent in going but two miles, though as much as twenty miles had been traversed before darkness set in.

Finally they concluded to stop and await daylight, for a few hours' sleep for themselves and rest for the animals would enable them to travel enough faster to repay for their hours of inactivity. So having selected a small glade in which to let their animals out to grass, they all, but one who was to stand on guard, stretched themselves upon the ground. But scarcely had the practiced ear of the ex-robber touched the earth, when he started up with an exclamation of sudden surprise.

"What now, Bain?" asked Walter, who was near the ex-robber.

"There's Ingins within a mile of this place," he replied again applying his ear to the ground.

His companions did likewise, and, true enough, they all distinguished the far-off sound of Indian revelry.

"Did you hear that?" asked Bain.

"Yes," replied his companion.

"We are not far from a band of Indians, and in all probability the very party that we've been trailing. In case it is, we could get no better time to attack them than now, while the darkness would aid us."

"Then we had better go on and reconnoiter," said Walter.

"Yes; and we want to lose no time, for if I mistake not, Indian revelry bodes some one no good," replied the ex-robber.

Leaving their animals grazing in the glade, our friends moved away in the direction of the wild tumult. While crawling over a slight swell in the ground, about half a mile from where they had left their animals, the light of a camp-fire reflected through the green-robed trees burst suddenly upon their view. They halted, for they were but about one hundred yards from the camp, and they could see a large number of savages moving hastily about, as though they were engaged in great preparations for some important event.

Eagerly they strained their eyes to catch a glimpse of Jasper Holmes and his family. The camp-fire was burning in the center of a small opening, which was surrounded by tall, clean-limbed trees. Every object within the opening was plainly visible to the eyes of our friends, and much to their joy as well as sorrow, they saw three persons, bound hand and foot, seated within the circle of light—two men and one woman—whom Gordon Morris, Walter Gray and Oscar Preston recognized as their old friends, Jasper Holmes and his wife, and Charley Fleet, their teamsster. But, where was Ida Holmes, the beautiful daughter of the emigrants? She was nowhere to be seen.

But what went meant that savage movement? What object was that bound to a large tree, around which the savages were piling arm-load after arm-load of dry brush and twigs? Our friends strained their eyes to a certain, but the tree interposed between them and the object of which they could only get a partial glimpse. But there was not a doubt but it was a human being whom the savages were preparing

to burn alive. Was it Ida Holmes whom the red barbarians were preparing to torture? Oh, God forbid!

There was no time to be lost, and our friends at once began crawling around to the opposite side of the camp-fire in hopes of ascertaining who the doomed victim was. They moved slowly and cautiously upon their hands and knees. They had made half the circuit of the camp when Sin Bain, who was in the advance, stopped and dropped abruptly upon his face, at the same time signaling his companions to follow his example.

"What now?" asked Morris, who had dropped by the ex-robbert's side.

The latter made no reply further than to lift his finger and point in advance of him. They had stopped but a few feet from a small opening, lit up by the unobstructed rays of the moon. Standing in the center of this opening, with his head bent in the attitude of listening, was a tall, powerful Sioux Indian. He was clutching a tomahawk and looking directly toward our friends, who, for several moments, were certain his basilisk eyes were fixed upon them.

For some time our friends remained breathlessly silent with their eyes fixed upon the savage, fearing to move lest he should give the alarm; but presently the cunning fellow turned, and peered into the gloom on the opposite side. At that moment the dark form of an animal sprung from the gloom into the opening, leaped into the air, and, seizing the red-skin by the throat, dragged him to the earth! The next instant another form—that of a man—glided into the opening and advanced toward the struggling animal and red-skin. The animal drew back as he did so, and then the man bent over the silent form of the savage. There was a quick whirl of his hand, in which a knife flashed in the moonlight; then he stood erect—a reeking knife in one hand, a reeking scalp in the other. A flash of triumph was upon his face as he held the scalp up before his eyes for a moment; then tying a knot in the glossy locks, he advanced and hung the bloody trophy upon a bush at the edge of the glade. As he did so his face was turned directly toward our friends, who had been filled with the most profound wonder at the deathly and silent movements of the mysterious stranger; but when

His features were made visible to them by his change in position, a smile of recognition passed over the features of Gordon Morris, and springing to his feet he walked boldly into the opening, closely followed by his companions.

At sight of them the stranger stepped back and clutched a tomahawk that was suspended to his belt; the animal at his side braced himself for a spring.

"Ay, my friend of the bow and arrow, down with your hatchet," said Morris; "one scalp on the head is worth two on the bush."

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the stranger, "it's my ole friend Morris. Down, Harmony, ole dog, down; that's no skulps here;" and Silent Shot, the scout, advanced to meet his friends.

Soon after this meeting, our friends, led by Silent Shot, crawled from the opening toward the Indian encampment, with the silence of so many dark phantoms.

A moment fraught with terrible excitement was drawing near.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### FRIENDS TO THE RESCUE.

The consciousness of approaching danger often acts upon some persons with a paralyzing effect. Though there may be an avenue open for escape, and plenty of time in which to make it, they will remain as motionless as carved statues. Such was the case with Professor Stebbins when he unluckily rolled off the pony's back and was set upon by the savages. Instead of remounting the animal, as Gordon Morris had requested, and fleeing, as he could have easily done, he turned with his face toward the savages, and the learned gentleman was taken prisoner without the least resistance. His captors looked upon him with considerable curiosity, for his peculiar dress and prominent eye-glasses were something new to their eyes. Besides, his general appearance was so effeminate that they were really in doubt as to his belonging to the race of pale-faces that infested their hunting-grounds, none of

whom ever had given themselves up as Stebbins had. However, they soon found that he was a real pale-face, deficient only in the physical strength and courage generally possessed by those with whom they had often come in contact.

Above all things the American Indian despises a coward. Had Professor Stebbins been versed in the nature and dialect of his captors, he would have learned within fifteen minutes after his capture that a terrible doom had been pronounced upon him, then and there.

The savages deprived their captive of all his valuables, except his indispensable eye-glasses, which they seemed to regard as an extra gift or freak of nature, then tying his hands behind his back they set off through the forest toward the north in single file, taking great care to conceal their trail. They shaped their course through the roughest and most broken part of the country, hoping, thereby, to conceal their course, or at least retard the progress of any one who felt disposed to follow them. To their captive the journey was a torturous one. His frail slippers soon gave out and had to be replaced by a pair of old Indian moccasins, which proved quite mortifying to the learned man's proud spirit. And, to make matters still worse, his breeches failed to stand the wear and tear of thick bushes and briars through which he was compelled to travel, and these garments had to be replaced by a pair of greasy buck-skin leggings, which gave the professor quite a semi-barbaric appearance.

"Dear me," he mused to himself, when he had fully realized his precarious situation, "if Miss Ida should see me with these horrid, dirty old rags on, I'd die of mortification. Oh, me! why on earth didn't I stay in Vermont among peace and plenty? Surely, it seems as if the great Omnipotent was trying my strength and courage. But then, the case has been where men, less courageous than I, have braved the dangers of the savages' land and made their names immortal. Let me see; somewhere in my histories—which are piled up in the great Stebbins' library in Vermont—I have read of certain individuals undergoing just such treatment of captivity as I now am—Ah, I have it now! It was Mungo Park, who for weeks and months suffered an

I am suffering among the American savages when the republic was in its infancy over a thousand years ago—”

His confounding American and African history was here brought to an abrupt end by the savage behind him giving him a whack upon his head for inadvertently overstepping the preceding savages' footsteps.

Siebbins uttered a cry of pain, and for a moment a rebellious feeling arose in his breast, but then he thought of Mango again, and curling his passion, he moved quietly along, taking good care, however, to plant his footsteps directly in those made by the savages before him.

Continuing their journey until noon, the Sioux halted to rest, and eat dinner, which consisted of dried venison and parched maize. While thus engaged, they were joined by another party of warriors, in whose power were three captives, whom Professor Siebbins readily recognized as Jasper Holmes and his wife, and Chenny Fleet, their Irish teamster.

Mrs. Holmes was mounted upon a pony, while the two men were upon foot with their hands fastened behind their backs. In the rear of the party half a dozen ponies were following, heavily loaded with plunder taken from the emigrants' wagons and the settlers' cabins at Morris Settlement.

Mr. Holmes and his wife were still on the sunny side of forty years—strong, pale and leary. They were naturally capable of enduring great hardship—such as the settlers of the frontier generally have to contend with; but their great misfortune in having all their earthly possessions destroyed by the ruthless hand of the red man, and themselves taken captives, their beloved daughter torn from their arms and carried away, all within a few days after their advent into the land where they expected to make their homes, weighed heavily upon their hearts, and made the future look gloomy indeed.

Chenny Fleet was one of those strong and solid fellows who take the world easy—facing dangers as only a brave man could, quite as much as, as most Irishmen are, and full of wit and humor at all times.

Professor Siebbins was the first to speak when the two parties met.

“Ah, me!” he sighed, addressing the other captives, “such

comes, my friends, of our spirit of adventure. Oh! that we had remained in Vermont—”

“ Fa’th, and be the Holy Mother,” replied Chenny, “ sick comes of yer spirit of cowardice, Fitz Stebbins; if yees had n’t run when the red bla’gards come onto us, wees wouldn’t ‘ave been in sick a fix. We could ’ave beat ‘em off aisy enough.”

“ Ah, me, Chenny, you have a wrong idea of tho motives that prompted me to escape when I saw these red-men were overpowering us in the conflict at our camp. My ideas were to escape and secure assistance and release you all from these red-men’s power. But, alas ! I trusted my confidence to the guidance of one Gordon Morris—your friend, Mr. Holmes—of Morris Settlement, and thus you see the result. Had I not been incumbered by Mr. Morris, I could have easily made my escape.”

“ Gordon Morris!” exclaimed Mr. Holmes; “ then you have seen him. Is he a captive, too?”

“ No,” replied Stebbins, “ I managed to beat these red-men off until he escaped; but by so doing was taken myself.”

“ Thank Heaven that he escaped!” sobbed Mrs. Holmes, “ for he will bring assistance to us and our poor, dear child.”

“ Ida—where is she, Mrs. Holmes?” questioned the professor.

“ God only knows. She was separated from us and taken away by another party of Indians.”

“ You told Mr. Morris of our captivity, did you, Fitz ?” asked Holmes.

“ Yes ; but he told me something far worse—Morris Settlement was destroyed last night by these bloodthirsty red-men and all its settlers killed except Mr. Morris and his daughter.”

That Stebbins was telling the truth, the captives had not a doubt ; and in an agony of utter hopelessness Mrs. Holmes wept bitterly, and wrung her hands with the deepest heartfelt sorrow.

The excitement of the savages’ meeting being over, they turned their attention to the prisoners, and, of course, their conversation was stopped.

After a few minutes’ halt, the two parties resumed their

comey together. From one of the savages, who spoke English quite fluently, the captives learned that they were being conducted to the Indian village, where they would be disposed of according to the dictates of their great chief, Crimson Hand.

When nightfall came on the Sioux found themselves quite weary with their day's tramp and the previous night's work; so, selecting a suitable place, they went into camp for the night, stationing guards at various points.

Stebbins was taken and fastened to the trunk of a large tree, while the other prisoners were only bound hand and foot, and were allowed to sit or stand at will. Why they did not allow the professor the same privilege, was soon made known to the captives. He was to be scalped and burned at the stake for their evening amusement!

After a supper of dried venison had been served, preparations began for the execution. Arm-loads of dry brush and twigs were gathered from the forest and heaped about the victim's feet.

Stebbins gazed at his grim captors with a half-pitiful, half-vacant stare. He was so completely overwhelmed with the consciousness of his fate that he had become speechless and transfixed with horror.

A savage was detailed to scalp the victim, but before the bloody deed was to be done a certain amount of incantations were to be performed by the medicine-man; songs were to be sung, dancing and other savage revelry performed. This preparation occupied over two hours. When accomplished a solemn silence prevailed throughout the camp. The savages seated themselves in a semicircle before the captive. With a magnificent flourish of the polished knife, the executioner advanced from the circle toward the victim.

But mark! A dull "whirr" is heard in the air; the savage utters a cry of mortal pain; the polished knife drops from his hand, and clutching wildly at his breast, he staggers forward, reels, and falls backward to the ground with the white-tipped shaft of an arrow protruding from his left breast!

Both captives and captors are struck with wonder at the sudden and strange turn of affairs; but, when the savages' eyes fall upon the arrow protruding from their comrade's

breast, they sprung to their feet, muttering as they did so the words, "Silent Shot!"

But again that ominous whirr is heard in the air, and another savage falls with an arrow through his heart; then, ere the amazed warriors could recover from their surprise, five human beings sprung from the darkness like so many phantoms—right into the circle of light—right into the midst of the savages they seemed to float, not a word or sound escaping their lips. Bright weapons flashed in the hands of the five phantom-like figures, and at every stroke a savage fell. Nor were they alone in their attack. A large animal sprung here and there, dragging a savage to the earth at every leap. The conflict was as terrible as it was silent. Half the savages had fallen ere they realized their danger. Then they turned and fled, leaving their dead and wounded, captives and plunder in the hands of the five phantom-like figures.

The captives were startled with fear and wonder at these strange and silent proceedings. But their suspense was only momentary. Among their five deliverers Mr. and Mrs. Holmes recognized Gordon Morris, Walter Gray, and Oscar Preston, with the flush of triumph upon their faces.

"This, my friends, is a terrible meeting," said Morris, advancing toward the captives.

"Indeed, indeed it is, Gordon," replied Jasper Holmes.

In a few moments the captives were set at liberty. Greetings were exchanged, and Silent Shot and the ex-robber, Sin Bain, introduced to the rescued emigrants. The scout bowed awkwardly, and shook hands with his new acquaintances; but, in doing so, his movements seemed to have an evasive and assumed bearing. He spoke but few words, and calling his dog to his side, he told Mr. Morris that he would go out a short ways from camp and keep watch, lest the savages might rally, and pounce upon them unawares.

The dead savages were removed beyond the radius of light, the fire replenished with fuel, and then our friends seated themselves to talk over the precariousness of their position.

"Free again!" exclaimed Professor Stebbins, as he seated himself near his friends before the glowing fire.

"Yes, and had you obeyed my injunction to flee when you

fell from the pony's back, you would not have been taken prisoner at all," said Morris, reprovingly.

"I know it, I know it, Mr. Morris, but then my combative spirit was aroused, and I wanted to kill, at least, ten of those Indians; and, sir, I would have accomplished it, had I possessed any weapon besides my gold toothpick. But, as it was, I was over-powered, twenty to one, and, like Major Park, doomed to much suffering and a slight foretaste of death at the stake."

"Yours was really a critical case of adventure, Fitz," said Mr. Holmes; "but," turning to Morris, "we heard that your settlement was deserted last night, and all but you and your daughter murdered."

"I am sorry to say it is so. Mattie was dragged from her pony's back to my side in the darkness by a stealthy red-skin. She was rescued afterward by Silent Shot, but was captured, and if alive, she is now a captive. So far, our loss is equal, is it not?"

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Holmes, "our Ida—our poor, dear child is a captive, too; and may God protect her from harm!"

At this juncture Silent Shot and his dog came in from the forest. Throwing himself upon the ground he said:

"I guess, friends, them reds are totally scared to death. There ain't a sign o' one o' the live cusses in ten miles o' here. And now, as there's two o' yer gal's captives, we'd better 'range matters to rescue 'em."

"That is true, Silent Shot, and we all feel perfectly free in trusting the whole arrangement in your hands, and to your superior judgment in such matters; and we are ready to act under your command," said Morris.

"That sounds like business, friend," replied the scout. "There never war but one person that regretted the trust that he confided in me, and that person war a red-skin. He trusted me to shoot an arrow at him three hundred yards, and the consequence was—a dead Virgin—ver' liet, died o' a pain in the heart. However, if I'm to command in this case, the first thing I'll advise is for you, Mr. Morris, to take these folks as don't know much 'bout Indians, and with all the horses and planks, make a bee-line for the island in Council Lake. Yo know what it is, don't ye, eh?"

"Yes; about thirty miles south-west of here."

"'Zactly. Once on the island and ye kin defend yerselves 'g'inst the hull Sioux nation. The surroundin' waters will furnish fish and the forest game fur food. You must remain there till we return.

"And bein's the Ingins and the robbers o' the Hunter's Lodge are all under the leadership o' one man, it's very probable that Miss Holmes has been taken there. Howsumever, as you," addressing Sin Bain, "hav' a leetle better knowledge o' the lodge than the rest o' us, you'd better take Gray and Preston and beat round in the vicinity o' the place, and find out what ye ken. It mout be that both the gals are taken there."

"And you—?"

"Wal, I'll take my dog and go back to the p'int where I last see'd Miss Mattie, and beat up the trail o' the reds what's got her, and foller 'em to the north pole but what I git the gal or they git my skulp. That is my plan, and now I am ready for any remarks, fur or ag'inst it, from the crowd!"

As usual, Professor Stebbins was the first to speak.

"Theoretically, and to some extent, practically speaking, I think my knowledge of the American Indians would fully qualify me to accompany your expedition; but then I am positive that my health will not admit of the exposure that we would necessarily have to pass through. Therefore, I presume I will have to accompany my friends to the lake, though with some reluctance. In conclusion I will say, Mr. Silent Shot, that your plan of action is quite in accordance with the military tactics of the day, and has my full approval."

Walter Gray and Oscar Preston exchanged smiles, while the scout burst into a loud laugh at the Yankee's expense.

"Ya-as," drawled the scout. "I think ye'd better go to the lake; that tongue o' yours's got too much play to trail Ingins. Besides, I think yer not overly supplied with genuine moral courage."

"Ahem—atchew! atchew!" sneezed the professor; "really, my friend, you are inclined to jest."

"Yas; at times," responded the scout, "but not changin' the subject, I'd jist say, that we'd better take a few hours'

sleep, as it's gittin' late, and besides, we'll need all the rest we can git, for to-morrow's work will be a hard 'un."

All readily acquiesced in this proposition; so a quantity of bedding was taken from the deserted red-skins' plunder, and comfortable couches made upon the ground.

"I suppose," said Walter, "that it will be necessary for some of us to stand guard, will it not?"

"No. I reckon as what that old dog can keep an eye and ear open. He's done it a thousand times and can do't ag'in. Here, Harmony, ole dog, trot out thar and look sharp for skunks."

With almost a human look, the sagacious brute trotted off to one side, seated himself on his haunches, pricked up his long, sharp ears in the attitude of listening and glanced at his master with a look as much as to say: "All right, ole boy, I'll keep watch."

The fire was now put out, and each of our friends sought his and her respective couch. Overcome with excitement and fatigue, they soon fell asleep, and, despite the danger that surrounded them, they slept soundly until morning.

With the early dawn they were all astir, feeling much refreshed by their rest. Preparations at once began for departure. They breakfasted on provisions the savages had carried from the settlement, repacked the captured animals and gathered up and saved the savages' deserted arms.

Greetings were exchanged, and then the three parties separated. Gordon Morris and the emigrants started for the lake; Sin Bain, Walter Gray and Oscar Preston turned toward the Hunter's Lodge, while the scout and his "ole dog" set off toward the point where he was captured the previous day, in order to take up the trail of the savages that had carried Mattie Morris away.

## CHAPTER X.

## A WILD RIDE AND A NARROW ESCAPE.

WHEN Mattie Morris' captors separated her from the presence of Silent Shot, all hopes of her ever seeing him again faded from her breast. She knew how bitterly the savage hated the scout, and that double shackles would be placed upon him, cutting him off from all probability of escape, or chances of life.

She had every reason to believe that her father was either dead or a captive, and had it not been for the cheering thoughts of her lover, Walter Gray, her case would have been hopeless. She would not, she *could* not for a single moment entertain the thought that any possible harm could befall Walter. For him she wished to live, since she believed all the rest of her friends had fallen before the savage foe. For him she resolved to battle against fear and despair.

When separated from the scout, Mattie was conducted through the forest in a north-westerly direction. It was very evident that she was being taken to a different point from that to which the scout was destined, though she was much surprised at these proceedings, as the savages usually take their captives to their village, in case they do not brain them the moment of capture.

They had proceeded but a short distance when they were met by three mounted savages, one of whom proved to be the great chief, Crimson Hand, and who was leading an extra and spirited pony, handsomely caparisoned.

Mattie closely scrutinized the savage chieftain's figure, form and features at a single glance, as he halted before her.

He was middle aged, strong and compactly built; yet he possessed not the narrowness of head, the prominent cheekbones, the smallness of eyes, the width of chin and the smoothness of skin which the Indians invariably possess. In fact, his form, his movements, his features and their expression were those of an Anglo-Saxon.

His dress was of the richest material, handsomely ornamented with figures and devices of Indian handiwork of dazzling colors. Gaudy feathers decked a gold and silver banded head-dress, while around his waist and neck he wore a belt and necklace of wampum, in the former of which a brace of revolvers and a polished scalping-knife were suspended.

With a smile of adoration lighting up his dusky features, the chief looked down into the pale, stern and beautiful face of the captive, and ejaculated the single word:

"Beautiful!"

Had an adder stung her to the heart, she could not have experienced a more hopeless feeling than at the sound of that voice. It was the voice of Barak McGavitt, the Indian agent! And now, since she had made that discovery, she readily recognized, in connection with his threat, that the villainous McGavitt and Crimson Hand was one and the same person!

Poor Mattie; little of mercy could she hope for now! Nevertheless, she determined to keep back the sorrow and trouble upon her heart, and show no humiliation to the villain. She would defy him to the last.

"Beautiful!"

The word sent the hot blood surging to her heart, and fixing a look of defiance, scorn and hatred upon the renegade, she fairly hissed between her set teeth, the word, "Devil!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the devil, somewhat surprised; "so you know me in my handsome disguise, and yet you seem but little surprised."

"Surprised?" sneeringly, Mattie replied. "No! It is no surprise to me. I always knew that you were the villain you are, Barak McGavitt, and believed you a traitor to your people and the Government you serve as Indian agent."

"My, Miss Morris, I am surprised at the deepness of your insight; but, since matters have assumed their present shape, I may as well frankly admit that I am acting in a double capacity—that is, I am Indian agent among the tribes over whom I hold the power of chief; thereby, I manage to keep up the demands of the savages upon the Gov-

ernment for supplies, and before it's done with, I manage, by a little ingenuity, to pocket the whole thing. Thus you see, Miss Morris, that I hold riches as well as power, and the object now, that has been uppermost in my mind for some time, is to find some gentle heart to share my wealth and power. Yesterday, I offered you that honor, Miss Morris, by the usual process of all gallant lovers, but my suit was ignominiously rejected. The act so wounded my love, and excited my vengeance, that I was determined to *compel* you to be my wife. So I at once dispatched, or rather led, a party of my warriors upon Morris Settlement and—"

"Yes, fiend incarnate!" hissed Mattie, reproachfully; "you stung to death the bosom that gave you nourishment."

"Be that as it may, Miss Morris," the wretch continued, "I have accomplished my purpose. I have got you in my power, and, for all I care now, the Government may go to the devil."

"And do you ever have any other idea than that you will be summoned there, too, in the great Hereafter?" asked Mattie, rebukingly. "Do not the cries of your victims ring in your ears—the cries of innocent women and children who greeted your coming to our settlement as a true friend? Do not their forms rise up before you with outstretched and white faces, and rebuke you for your crimes?"

The chief fairly winceed under the brave girl's questions. For a moment it would have been a difficult point for a casual observer to decide which was captive, Mattie or Crimson Hand. In fact, so far as moral courage and guiltless conscience were concerned, Mattie was the captor, for she had driven him to a true sense of his sin beyond denial.

However, the chief soon regained his usual bravado, and said:

"I admire your eloquence, Miss Morris. All women are good talkers, but you are an exception. In fact, had you not been, I should have never bothered my head about making you my wife, for it's not every woman that would make an equal for the great Crimson Hand."

"Your wife? Does the monster suppose that any power on earth could induce me to be his wife?"

The chief laughed mockingly, and dismounting, said:

"You seem quite confident as to what you will do, Miss Morris. Possibly you are expecting a release at the hands of Walter Gray? If so, your expectations will never be realized, for, by my direction he was taken captive, while on his way from the fort during the night of the storm, and he is now at the Indian village, where he will be held a hostage for your good behavior as *my* wife. Should you prove rebellious, by word or deed, your spirit will be tamed by roasting your pretty affianced before your eyes."

"Inhuman wretch!" exclaimed Mattie, indignantly, her eyes flashing with scorn and anger; "you think to wound my heart and humble my spirit by your cruel falsehood! But you will find that I have a heart, and a will that your vile words can not crush."

"We'll see about that," the chief replied, greatly disappointed in the maiden's resolute will. "However, it is needless to waste time in parleying about it, so you will allow me to assist you up on this pony's back and we will be off. You see that I have come fully prepared for this occasion, my dear?"

As the chief concluded his remarks, he advanced to assist Mattie to mount the pony, but, scorning his proffered assistance, she seized the reins and sprung upon the animal's back with an ease and grace acquired only through much practice.

The chief, vaulting into his saddle, addressed a few words to the savages on foot. They immediately set off toward the west, when, bidding Mattie to follow him, he wheeled his animal and moved away toward the north, the two mounted savages bringing up the rear.

There was no alternative but to obey, and Mattie quietly complied, though with a heavy heart. For a moment she was tempted to make an attempt to escape, but, the eyes of the savages were continually upon her. Nevertheless, she determined to watch her chances to catch the red skins off their guard. It was a bold and determined resolution for the pale, tender maiden, but, Mattie Morris was not the woman to helplessly succumb to the danger that surrounded her.

After riding some distance through a rough, wooded country, the chief turned into a well-beaten trail. He had traversed it but a short distance, when he suddenly came to an abrupt

halt, uttering an exclamation of surprise. Just before him he saw several moccasin-tracks which, from some peculiarity, he knew to be the tracks of Arapahoe Indians. And since the Arapahoes were the deadly enemies of the Sioux, Crimson Hand felt no little uneasiness; and when a bullet, all at once, went whizzing through the air so close to his royal head, that one of the flaming feathers of his gaudy head-dress was cut, the chief's fears were at once aroused to the highest pitch, and he at once dispatched his two savages in search of the foe, while he, falling back at Mattie's side, said:

"Come, my dear, we must ride briskly forward. The cursed Arapahoes are going to give us some trouble."

"I am sure," replied Mattie, mockingly, "that I don't care. I would rather be the prisoner of a genuine Indian than the captive of a cowardly renegade like you."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the villain; "before an enemy of mine shall possess you, I will bury my tomahawk in your brain. The pony you ride is the fastest upon the plains, and the one which I am riding is almost as fleet, hence, it will be utterly impossible for an enemy to overtake us."

Mattie mocked the villain's words, "*The pony that you ride is the fastest upon the plains.*"

"Then you would run like a true coward, were you to see an Arapahoe?" Mattie asked, tauntingly.

"Were it not for you, my dear, I—"

The villain did not say what he would do, for, before he could finish the sentence, a bullet whistled through the air; the renegade's animal leaped wildly forward with a cry of pain and fell dead, its brain pierced by the bullet. The chief was pitched forward several feet over the animal's head, and landed, headforemost into a small basin of muddy water.

"The pony that you ride is the fastest upon the plain," murmured the brave girl, as whirling the animal to the left, she dashed furiously away.

When Crimson Hand had extricated himself from the mud-hole, and had rubbed the mud and water from his eyes, it was to behold his captive flying from his power. His rage and fury knew no bounds. He cursed, raved, threatened, but all to no purpose, and in the extremity of his rage, he seized his rifle and fired at the fugitive, but the bullet went wide of

its mark and was buried in the haunches of the pony, causing it to rear and plunge wildly and slightly laming it.

"Never mind, my fine lady," he hissed, shaking his clenched fist at her, "I'll catch you again, and then—"

At this instant a soft tread was heard by the renegade, and turning quickly he found himself face to face with Okaleah, chief of the Arapahoes.

For a moment the rival warriors stood and glared at each other like maddened beasts; then they grappled in a deadly conflict. The struggle was brief and decisive. Okaleah was slain by Crimson Hand and scalped!

In the mean time, Mattie was widening the distance between her and the chief, though she noticed her animal was growing lame from the wound inflicted by the renegade's bullet. She soon found that she was riding upon a narrow, thinly-wooded ridge that seemed to grow higher and higher as she advanced, while at the foot of the ridge, on either side, an impassable swamp stretched its oozy length, from which aquatic fowls innumerable ducks arose with a startled cry. Suddenly, a familiar object recalled to the fugitive's mind the fact that she had ridden upon that same ridge with her father, about one year previous. The ridge was called the Deer Trap, and led to a deep and narrow gorge or cañon known as the Wolf's Mouth at a point where the ridge was cut by a wild, dashing stream. The channel through which it flowed was not more than fifteen feet wide, but fully a hundred feet from the top down to the water. Standing on the edge of the cañon, on the lip of the Wolf's Mouth, and looking down, you could see sharp but sharp limestone rocks jutting out from either bank of the cliff like the white fangs of a wild beast—hence the name. And Mattie knew that she was in the Deer Trap, with the Wolf's Mouth yonder before her, and the swamps reflected on either side like the black wings of a bird of prey. To turn and retrace her foot-steps, was her only chance of escape from the Deer-Trap. She would not be compelled to go back to the point where she escaped from Crimson Hand, but by keeping to the left, she could head the small swamp by a few minutes' ride, and then could turn eastward again. But hardly had she decided upon this course, when a wild yell broke the silent echoes of the place, and,

looking back, she discovered Crimson Hand's two mounted warriors coming toward her at full speed.

Not a moment was to be lost. Speaking to her animal the lovely fugitive dashed on toward the Wolf's Mouth, determined to hurl herself into its awful depths rather than be taken a captive again.

Weak from loss of blood, and stiff with the pain of its recent wound, the fugitive's pony was fast losing its speed, and she had not gone far when Mattie discovered that the savages were fast gaining upon her. It would require every effort for her to reach the Wolf's Mouth before being overtaken. Why it was she knew not, but from some secret power or influence she looked forward to the Wolf's Mouth for deliverance and safety. If she could only reach there, then she would be beyond danger; so she guided her panting, foam-sleeked animal on—while her pursuers came thundering close behind, swinging their tomahawks over their heads and yelling in a wild and excited manner. They seemed to define the fugitive's expectations of deliverance at the Wolf's Mouth, and they were making every exertion in their power to overtake her before she reached the cañon. It was a race of fearful interest.

Every nerve of the fugitive's pony was brought into action; it seemed pervaded with the same spirit as its lovely rider. Mattie strained her eyes for a glimpse of the dark opening of the wished-for goal, while the clatter of her pursuers' horses could be distinctly heard close behind. She dared not look back, but suddenly, one of the savages uttered a piercing shriek, not of triumph, but of mortal pain, and the next instant he dashed wildly past her, his grim face contorted with agony, while with both hands he was clutching wildly and nervously at the feathered shaft of an arrow that protruded from his breast, reeling and tottering on his animal's back, and—oh, God! suddenly the horse and his wild rider disappeared in the earth before the maiden's eyes; he had been swallowed up in the awful depths of the Wolf's Mouth, while she was almost at the brink herself, and the other savage almost upon her.

The fugitive's first impulse was to check her animal. But it was too late. She was on the brink of the yawning Wolf's

Mouth. Her brave animal slackened his speed for a short second, reared slightly upon his hind feet, then leaped wildly forward through the air and landed his beautiful rider on the opposite side of the dark cañon! But it was the noble animal's last leap. Nature had been overtaxed, and, bleeding at the nose, he fell dead. Mattie was thrown forward over his head, but fortunately she was uninjured, and rising quickly to her feet, she looked back just in time to see the other savage and his horse sink down into the yawning abyss.

Unconsciously, the maiden walked to the edge of the cañon and looked down upon the dark and dizzy depths, up from which came the hollow roar of the gushing waters, mingled with the ghostly echoes that ever pervaded the place. The stream was hidden from her view by the darkness, but half-way up toward the top she could see upon the sharp rocks, shards of garments torn from the ill-fated savages.

"That was a narrow escape, Miss Morris," spoke a familiar voice in the ear of the maiden.

She started and looked up with an expression of joy and surprise. Silent Shot stood before her.

"Oh, my noble friend!" she exclaimed, grasping his brawny hand in hers. "Thank God you are safe!"

"And you, too, Miss Morris," he replied.

"Yes; but it would be better were I dead."

"Why so, Miss Mattie?"

"Because, with my friends all dead, life would be a burden to me."

"But you are mistaken; yer friends are not all dead."

"Oh, Silent Shot! keep me not in suspense then, if what you say is true. Tell me what you know of my friends."

"Well, yer father and Walter Gray are alive. I have seen them and talked with them—"

"When?"

"As late as this mornin'. Yer father has gone to Council Lake with some friends, and yer lover—I mean Walter Gray, and others are in search o' you."

"Thank Heaven! then I have something to live for!" and the maiden clasped her hands over her breast, and, with her eyes held upward, her pale lips moved in prayer of thanks to the Great Protector of all.

## CHAPTER XI.

## SEARCHING FOR BURIED TREASURE.

UNDER the guidance of Sin Bain, the ex-robber, Walter Gray and Oscar Preston arrived in the vicinity of the Hunter's Lodge toward evening. From various discoveries during the day, they had every reason to believe that Miss Holmes had been confined a prisoner at the lodge. But, how should they know beyond a doubt? Of course, Bain dare not make his presence known to the robbers, and since Walter Gray was known by them and supposed to be a prisoner in the hands of the Indians, he dare not approach the rendezvous. Should Oscar go, he, too, might be recognized by the robbers and their suspicions aroused; consequently their only course was to keep themselves concealed in the woods about the lodge, and watch until a majority of the "hunters" were absent, and then search the lodge by force, since the knowledge the ex-robber possessed of the place would enable them to search the secret chambers and vaults connected with it.

So, as nothing could be done that evening, the three men concealed themselves in a dense thicket of underbrush to pass the night. A fire was not required, since the weather was quite warm, and they had cooked food sufficient for a day or two.

Sin Bain interested his companions with stories of the robber-band, their code of laws, their regulations and understanding that existed between the different bands and the amount of treasure of different kinds in the possession of the robbers of the Hunter's Lodge. In speaking of the amount of bullion, he suddenly uttered an exclamation of surprise, and thrusting his hand into an inner side-pocket, he drew forth and held up in his fingers a small piece of crumpled parchment.

"Hallelujah!" exclaimed the ex-robber; "what has been the matter with me that I have never thought of that before?"

"What is it?" asked Walter, smiling at his friend's excitement.

"Why, that piece of parchment is worth a king's ransom."

"You are surely jesting, my friend."

"Not a bit of it, sir; not a bit, and I'll tell you why. The robbers of the Hunters' Lodge have a regular set of officers elected every month, with but one exception, and that is the office of president or captain, which is vested in Barak McGavitt for an indefinite period. Last month I held the important office of Treasure-keeper, whose duty it is to watch over the valuable articles, such as silver plate and costly jewelry, and bury the bullion in a new place every month, which place was to be known only to the Treasure-keeper, but described and mapped on parchment by a certain cipher known only among the robbers, so that the place could not be lost. Well, when my successor was elected three days ago he was absent, and, of course, I held over till he returned. But up to my foretaste of death in the Ghostly Glen, Tromp Grill, my successor, had not returned, and, in the excitement that prevailed over my supposed treachery, and my execution, they forgot that I possessed the secret of the buried gold, and until this hour I had forgotten it myself, and that—that piece of parchment holds the secret, my friends—the secret to the digg' story of fifty thousand dollars' worth of bullion, which, to be havin', my fingers' ends are burning already."

"Hist!" Bain suddenly commanded.

All became breathlessly silent, and bending their heads, listened. Instantly their ears caught the sound of human voices and footsteps.

"It is the robbers; I know their voices—it's Tromp Grill, and Geoff Hansfelt; listen."

They listened, and all heard one of the robbers say:

"Now, if that gold is this side of the lodge, it's right here under this tree, for I've seen Bain lookin' 'round more than once durin' his term of Treasure-keeper."

"Well, I'll tell you how you can tell, Tromp."

"How, Geoff?" asked the Treasure-keeper of the Hunter's Lodge.

"Why, go to work and dig for it, and when you git it you will know it."

"And suppose you go to the devil, Mr. Hansfelt, and when you git there you'll know it," returned Grill, crustily.

"Come, now, Tromp, the Treasure-keeper must keep cool, and—the treasure of the Hunter's Lodge."

"Yes, the treasure; where the devil is the treasure?" sneered the Treasure-keeper.

"Somewhere in the territory of Iowa, buried in the woods 'on the 'Missouri Slope,' by one Sin Bain, with whom the secret of its burial spot perished, on or about yesterday, in the Ghostly Glen."

"But, where's the 'cipher map' that you fools overlooked?"

"Wal, I suppose it's on the body of Sin Bain, in the Ghostly Glen, where you are too big a coward to venture alone."

"If we don't find the gold here, I move the whole band marches in force to the Ghostly Glen to-morrow, and search the body of that accursed Bain for the cipher map."

"Humph!" sneered Hansfelt, "don't you suppose that the wolves have devoured Bain, bones, clothes, map and all, by this time?"

"Well, we can go and see," returned Tromp Grill.

"Then let us go to diggin', Mister Treasure-keeper."

For more than an hour our friends could hear the labored breathing of the robbers and the ring of their shovels. But, finally, this labor ceased, amid an outburst of oaths from the rascals.

"Another fool's errand," cried Tromp Grill.

"I told you so before you came," returned Hansfelt. "Here you've dug for over an hour, and what have you found?"

"Found you're a durned fool."

"And yourself a blind ass!"

"Be careful, Geoff Hansfelt, or I'll stick your cowardly carcass into that hole, and bury you alive—"

"Along with Sin Bain's buried gold, eh?"

"Go to the devil."

"Not till that gold's found; and what's the use standin' here all night quarreling with each other, because each other has been a fool?"

"Wal, what's to be done next?"

"I move we go back to the lodge, rest till mornin', then get Jude Catspaw an' Black Jim, and march up to the Ghostly Glen and search the body of Bain for the cipher map, and if we find it, and then the gold, divide the spoils, and then cut dirt for parts unknown, for I'm gettin' tired of this robber-life."

"I second that motion," responded Tromp Grill. "That's the first speech I ever heard you make, Geoff Hanseit; but do you think we will meet with any trouble in the Glen?"

"Trouble? No; what would four brave men care for a little trouble, or all the ghosts in the Glen?"

"Not a whit—but, oh, Lord! what was that?"

"It sounded like a groan."

"No, like the growl of a bear."

"Let's run."

"Agreed."

So saying, the cowardly rascals turned and fled toward the lodge, while our friends could hardly refrain from a roar of laughter at the cleverness with which Sin Bain had aroused their fears by playing bear.

The rest of the night was passed without molestation, and early the next morning our friends shaped their course toward the Ghostly Glen.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE MARCH TO THE GHOSTLY GLEN.

An hour after sunrise the following morning, Tromp Grill, Geoff Hanseit, Jude Cat-spaw and Black Jim filed out of the Hunter's Lodge, and moved away toward the Ghostly Glen like soldiers marching to battle. Each one carried a rifle and wore a belt that fully bristled with knives and pistols.

"We're near the spot, boys, be ready."

The robbers lowered their rifles and cocked them for instant use; then, on signal they gave out. In a few mo-

ments the place of execution was reached, and, true enough, there hung Sin Bain, just as they had left him, but they did not notice how the rope was arranged around his neck and that his toes were resting on the ground.

When the robbers had approached the supposed defunct Bain, quite a parley ensued, which like to have resulted in a general row, as to who should search the body for the paper; but, as the majority were in favor of Tromp Grill, that worthy could not get out of the unpleasant duty; so, laying aside his gun, and rolling up his sleeves, he said, advancing toward the body:

"Humph! cowards! Do you think Tromp Grill is afraid to fumble the pockets of a dead man?"

But, scarcely had the last word left the villain's lips when a scream, that almost froze the blood in the robbers' veins, burst from the lips of Sin Bain, and, instantly, another cry of terror escaped the robbers' lips, and turning about they fled like so many frightened deer.

Scarcely were they out of sight when Walter and Oscar emerged from a clump of undergrowth near by, and, with their sides shaking with laughter, they advanced and assisted the ex-robber to release himself.

The four robbers never stopped until they had brought up in the Secret Chamber of the Hunter's Lodge.

"What the thunder's the matter now?" asked the robber-captain, as his men came rushing into the chamber.

"Matter!" exclaimed Grill; "why, the devil's to pay. We went out to the Glen and found Bain's body hangin' where we left it, and when I was about to commence the search, a scream, that started great drops of ice down my back, burst from the lips of the corpse."

"A scream? You don't mean to say that corpse screamed?" asked McGavitt.

"Yes, screamed," returned Grill with emphasis.

"Then Bain is not dead."

"Not dead? Why, the body was already putrid, and the wolves had eaten the flesh off his legs to the bones."

"And you did not get the paper?" asked the captain.

"No! Do you suppose I was goin' to finger a screamin' dead man?"

"I tell you, Bain is not dead, if what you're tellin' is not another of your lies. There is some mystery in the affair and I mean to have it fathomed; so every mother's son of you can prepare yourselves to march in less than five minutes," commanded Barak McGavitt, the robber captain.

The captain, followed by all his men but one, who was left on guard at the lodge, filed out from the lodge and moved away toward the Ghostly Glen, numbering in all, sixteen strong, ferocious looking villains, armed to the teeth.

An hour's brisk travel brought them to their destination, but, what was their surprise to find the body of Sin Bin gone! The robber chief fairly danced with anger and rage at the stupidity of Tramp Grill, the Treasure-keeper; and in the extremity of his fury he drew a pistol and shot Grill dead. But, scarcely had the report of the weapon pealed out through the green woodland, when the report of a score of rifles, mingled with the yell of as many Arapahoe Indians, burst like thunder on the robbers' ears. Six of their number fell dead—Barak McGavitt, the Indian agent, robber captain, Sioux chief, among their number. The other robbers attempted escape, but the ambuscaded Arapahoes swarmed out from the undergrowth, out from the forest shadows, up the glen, down the glen and from the trees by the scores, and in five minutes' time, not one of that band that had entered the Ghostly Glen remained unscalped. Okedalah's death had been avenged, and the wicked career of Barak McGavitt was ended.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CAPTIVE OF THE HUNTER'S LODGE.

No sooner was Barak McGavitt and his men out of sight of the Hunter's Lodge, than Oscar Preston descended the hill in the rear of the building and rapped at the door of the lodge.

"Come in. What the devil you poundin' that fur?" growled a voice within.

Oscar opened the door and entered. The robber guard confronted him, knife in hand, with:

"What do you want here? Who are you?"

"I'm Luke Harpe," replied Oscar, with a nonchalant air. "I'm a messenger from the Platte Ranch, with a message for Captain McGavitt."

"Eh, ah?" exclaimed the guard; "thet so? Let's have the grip and password, old friend."

Oscar took the robber's hand, and then leaned forward and whispered in his ear—gave him the grip and password as Sin Bain had instructed him.

"That's it, Harpe," said the guard. "I'm glad to meet ye, old friend. Take a seat. How's biz at the ranch?"

"Slow; quite dull," replied Oscar; "hope you kin report better."

"Yes; we made quite a haul 't other day of a young miner, and the captain's got the poorest gal up-stairs I ever see'd—a emigrant gal."

At this juncture Oscar arose, crossed the room and opening the door looked out; then he closed it again and resumed his conversation.

In a few moments footsteps were heard at the door, and the guard turned and advanced toward it, but, before he could open it, Oscar seized him from behind and hurled him to the floor. Then the door opened and Sin Bain and Walter Gray entered and assisted him to bind and gag the guard. This done, Oscar said:

"True enough, Miss Holmes is a prisoner here—up-stairs."

"Then you go up and release her while I search the Secret Chamber for your gold. You watch the guard, Gray," commanded Bain.

Oscar ascended the stairs, while Bain pictured the key to the prisoner and entered the Secret Chamber.

Oscar found that the room up stairs was divided into two apartments by a rude partition with a door in the center. The first room contained nothing but two pallets of skins. He crossed the floor and tried the partition door. He found it was strongly locked and bolted. He rapped gently upon it, and his heart gave a wild leap when he heard a faint voice within.

Turning he rushed down-stairs and procured an ax, with which he returned and began to beat down the door. It required but a few moments to accomplish his task. The door burst open and he entered the room, which he found furnished with all the luxury and taste of civilization. In one corner, near a little window, sat the object of his search—Ida Holmes, pale, sad and beautiful.

They had known each other years before, and a light of recognition flashed in their eyes the instant they met. Ida was the first to speak.

"Oh, Mr. Preston!" she exclaimed, rising to her feet, and offering her hand; "is it thus that we meet?"

Oscar took the proffered hand and replied:

"It is, Miss Holmes, and may God spare us another such. But come, let us not tarry here. The robbers may return."

"Robbers?" exclaimed Ida, startled with surprise.

"Yes; robbers, Miss Holmes. This place is a den of robbers."

"The villains! they told me this was the rendezvous of a party of hunters who pretended to have rescued me from the Indians; and I was placed here for safety, with the promise of being taken to my friends in a few days; but alas! I know not whether one of my friends live."

"Yes, they live. I saw your parents yesterday. I assisted to rescue them from the Indians," replied Oscar.

"Oh, thank Heaven! How grateful I feel to you, Mr. Preston," said Ida, as together they descended the stairs, where they found Walter and Sin Bain, with Oscar's gold, that he had found in an alcove in the Secret Chamber, waiting them.

After greetings had passed between Ida and her old friend, Walter Gray, the robber girl was bound hand and foot, and then our friends took their departure for Council Lake. On their way, Sin Bain stopped in the little opening, near where they had spent the night before, and unearthed the treasure that Trap Grill and Geof Hanselt had dug for, not ten feet from where it was really buried.

A few moments after our friends had left the lodge, the Arapahoes came down upon it like a legion of infuriated demons, and in a short time it had been ransacked and enveloped

In flames, the robber guard left in the building by our friends having slipped his bonds and escaped.

The Hunter's Lodge was burned to the ground; fortunately, the hidden door leading to the Secret Chamber was unnoticed by the Indians and uninjured by the fire; and when Bain, Gray and Preston returned there, about three weeks later, they entered the secret apartment, and found an immense amount of treasure of various kinds, which they carried away.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### SUMMER CLOUD'S STORY.

From the Wolf's Mouth, Silent Shot and Mattie Morris took their way through the forest toward Council Lake. The journey was a long and tedious one, beset with many difficulties and dangers; but, the scout thought nothing of this, only so far as the safety and welfare of his fair charge was concerned; but Mattie had taken courage from her providential deliverance from the power of Crimson Hand and his minions, and, encouraged by hopes of meeting her father and lover soon, she felt equal to the journey before them.

As the shades of night drew on apace, they stopped in a little dell shut in by hills and giant forest trees. The scout struck a fire beneath a ledge of projecting rocks, then turning to Mattie, said:

"We can not travel without somethin' to eat, Miss Morris, and as we have nothing at all, I will run out into the forest and secure some game before darkness sets in. You can rest perfectly quiet and easy, for you are in no danger. I will not be gone long."

So saying, the scout and the dog moved away into the woods. Mattie seated herself near the fire and sank into a deep reverie; watched, with a vacant look, the myriads of sparks go drifting upward, and the fantastic figures of light that danced and shifted upon the face of the scarped and fluted rock; listened to the evening zephyrs whispering among the trees, and the whirr of nocturnal wings overhead.

Suddenly the soft tread of feet aroused the maiden, and looking around she saw a little figure emerge from the forest and walk toward her.

It was the Indian woman, Summer Cloud.

"Ay, fair lady, I find you alone again," said the dusky woman.

"Yes, but my companion or protector will soon return," said Mattie.

The woman glanced uneasily around her, and in a low tone asked :

"Who is your protector, my lady, if I may be allowed the question?"

"Silent Shot, the scout, is all the name I ever heard, though of course it is not his real name."

Summer Cloud was silent for a moment, then said :

"No, Silent Shot is not the scout's real name."

"Then you know him?"

"How long will he be gone?" Summer Cloud asked, evasively.

"Not long; he went in search of game for supper. But, what is the matter, Summer Cloud? you are terribly agitated."

"Oh, fair lady, if your heart ached like mine, then you would be agitated."

"Something has happened you—"

"Yes, something terrible, fair lady, something terrible! The last friend I had on earth has been stricken down in death—my husband!—my brave chief, Okalealah, has been murdered, and by the hand of my father, Barak McGavitt, alias Crimson Hand, the great Sioux chief and robber captain."

"Barak McGavitt your father?" exclaimed Mattie, starting with wonder and surprise.

"Yes, fair lady, but you will not think it strange when I tell you that I am not an Indian."

"You are jesting," said Mattie, with surprise.

"I am not. Look, and be convinced," and the woman tore open the bosom of her dress, and revealed a breast of snowy whiteness.

"You speak the truth, Summer Cloud, though it seems strange; but why do you live among the Indians?"

"Because I could not live with the one I loved among my own people; but oh, my dear girl! I have not told you the half, and my heart aches so terribly, so terribly!" and the woman wrung her hands and wept bitterly.

"Tell me, Summer Cloud," said Mattie, consolingly, "the sorrow that rests upon your heart; perhaps I can give you some consolation."

"I would, dear girl, but I fear he will come, and oh, God! it would kill me to look upon his face—his dear face again."

"Do you mean Silent Shot?"

"Yes, dear girl, Silent Shot, whose name is—ah, dearer to me than life. Let us sit down here and I will tell you why, but I must go away—away, and wander and wander through the aisles of the forest before he comes."

The two seated themselves upon a large rock between the fire and a clump of shrubbery, behind which stood the form of a man, his heart rising and falling like the waves of a troubled sea. It was Silent Shot, the scout.

"Five years ago," began Summer Cloud, "I resided with my father, Barak McGavitt, in Cincinnati, Ohio. My mother was dead and I was alone with my father, having neither brother nor sister. I was not altogether happy, because I knew my father was not leading a strictly honest life, though he had much influence as a politician, and held several positions of honor as such. In the mean time I had reached my eighteenth birthday, though my heart was not my own. I had plighted it to Richard Ellmore, a promising young lawyer and political opponent of my father. Secretly my father hate my lover, and not until I had mentioned the fact of our engagement to him, did his wrath burst forth. He forbid Richard, under penalty of death, ever to cross his threshold again, and me he threatened with all kinds of punishment in case I ever spoke to him again. Of course I did not wish to act contrary to the will of my parent, and having a secret interview with Richard, we put off our marriage until father's wrath should blow over. Soon after, however, my father was appointed an Indian agent by the President for this territory. In repairing to his new field of labor, to my surprise I was compelled to follow him. We first took up our residence at Whitney's Settlement. Father was away from home most the

time, though his duties as Indian agent did not require it, and I began to grow suspicious of the cause of his prolonged absence. To my sorrow I soon found that he had joined a band of horse-thieves and river pirates, as they were called and that, instead of working for peace among the Indians he was inciting them to war. All this I knew and kept secreted in my heart—fearing the awful consequences that would follow an exposure. One day he came to me and told me that the section of the tribe of Sioux Indians along the river had placed him at their head, with the name of Crimson Hand. He also told me that he had been appointed captain of a band of villains, with their rendezvous at what was called the Hunter's Lodge. I know not why he was so anxious for me to know of his villainy when he could as well have kept it a secret from me. But, be that as it may, I talked, I prayed, I begged for him to give up his wicked calling, but my petitions only provoked him to anger. For awhile I was tempted to expose him, but then my pride, my love for him forbade; and so I resolved to keep silent, though the consciousness of his sin was almost unbearable. I knew that justice would eventually find him out and punish him as his crimes deserved.

"Time passed on. One day my father came home from the Indian village, after a long absence, and told me that he had selected a husband for me—a young chief of the Sioux tribe. This was too much for me to bear. I could not submit to such a fate, as I had submitted to the rest of his inhuman treatment, so I refused to comply with his arrangement. At this he grew indignant and swore he would force me to submission by starvation and imprisonment. I knew him well enough to know that he would do as he threatened, and driven to the last extremity I resolved to flee. But, where could I go to be beyond his power? This was the question that agitated my mind. I could not return to my cabin, where, and the protection that I knew the settlers would willingly offer me, would be but slight compared with the force that Crimson Hand would bring against them; and I knew he would not hesitate to destroy the settlement. At last I remembered that the Sioux Indians, of whom my father was chief, and the Arapahoe tribe were bitter enemies,

and constantly at war; and, as they were about equal in power, I resolved to seek protection in the Arapahoe camp. So, at the hour of midnight, when all slept, I crept from my room, took the bundle of clothes and provisions I had prepared during the day, and stole out of the house—out into the dark, dark forest.

"I will not attempt to describe the suffering I endured but, after four days' weary wandering, I reached the Arapahoe camp. In consequence of my coming willingly into their midst, and asking their protection, I was treated with all the kindness and respect that I could have received at the hands of civilization. Of course their habits and customs were rude and uncivilized to me, but, in the course of time I became accustomed to these. I now gave up all hopes of the future—of ever looking upon the loved face of Richard Ellmore again, though my love for him was just as warm—yea, a thousand times warmer than when I first plighted it to him.

"A year rolled by—a year among the Arapahoes. I had grown accustomed to Indian life and had formed an acquaintance with all the young squaws and braves in the lodges. I had grown to be quite a center of attraction to the young chiefs of the tribe. Among their number was one named Okalealah—tall, handsome and majestic, brave, kind and generous—for whom I had a great liking. I can not say I loved him, for I loved but one, and that was Richard."

At this juncture there was an agitated motion of the thick shrubbery behind them, but they were too engrossed to notice it. Summer Cloud continued:

"One day Okalealah asked me to be his wife, and, in for the circumstances, I could not refuse him; so we were married according to the Indian rites, and then I permitted myself to be painted and dressed like an Indian princess as you see me now. Still I was not happy, and there were times when I wanted to die, and there were times when I longed to be alone, and often I stole out of camp and wandered through the forest, thinking of the past and what it had been—of the future and what it would bring. Once I was seated in the shadow of a tree brooding over my life's sunshine and sorrow when I was startled by a footstep. I looked

ap, and saw a man dressed in the garb of a hunter pass near me. I recognized his face. It was that of Richard Ellmore! I attempted to cry out, but my tongue was paralyzed. I attempted to rise to my feet and rush toward him, but in vain; and in a moment he was gone.

"Oh! dear girl! no one knows what I suffered the next few days. Some secret power would lead me into the forest daily, though it was not the hopes of meeting Richard, who I learned from Okalealah, was the great scout, Silent Shot. I did not wish to meet him, I did not wish him to know that I lived, for, since I was the wife of Okalealah, I could never be anything to him, and I was afraid that when he learned that I was the wife of an Indian, he would despise me—despise my memory, and, oh God! to know that, it would kill me."

"Several times within the past week I have met and been near him. Once on the night that Morris Settlement fell, when I poured the liquid of life between your lips when you lay unconscious yester in the forest. Then I stood face to face with him; looked into his loving eyes; but he did not recognize Laura McGavitt in my Indian disguise. Again, when he lay bound a prisoner in the power of the Sioux, a night or two ago, I managed to release him with the assistance of Okalealah.

"And now, dear girl, you know my story. I am alone in the world and miserable. Okalealah, my last friend, was slain by my father, Crimson Hand. Now I must leave you. It is getting late, and Richard may come. A party of Arapahoes are encamped not far off. I will join them—"

"Never, never, Laura, will you leave me again." It was Silent Shot that spoke thus, as he advanced from behind the shrubbery and clasped his lost darling to his heart.

"Oh, Richard! you know not—" began the woman.

"Hush, darling! I know all," interrupted Silent Shot, or Richard Ellmore; "forgive me, but I have listened to your story of sorrow and wrong from beginning to end. You have done only as a brave and noble woman would have done, and I only thank God that you are spared to make happy my life—to reward me for the days and hours I have spent in searching for you."

"Oh, Richard! dear Richard, is this not all a dream?" Laura asked, her head dropping upon the scout's breast.

"No, Laura, it is all a reality," the scout replied, imprinting a kiss upon the young woman's lips.

"Then God knows I am happy again," Laura murmured.

The night was passed on the spot, and the following morning the trio set off on their journey to the lake, where they arrived, after two days' travel, but a few hours behind the party which had rescued Ida Holmes. And then there was another happy meeting of children and parents and lovers and friends.

Our friends remained at the lake until they had learned that Crimson Hand was dead, and the Indian war ended as suddenly as it had begun; then they took their departure for the ruins of Morris Settlement; and in a few days new cabins had been erected on the site of the old ones, though many kind faces, that once had lightened up at the stranger's coming, were gone forever. Their charred bodies were gathered from the ashes of their homes and interred near the settlement.

Richard Ellmore and Laura were married, and made their home at Morris Settlement. Silent Shot had disappeared from forest and plain as mysteriously as he had come.

The scout laid aside his bow and backwoods illiterate manner of speaking, and turned his attention to agricultural pursuits, in which, and the society of his wife, he found more pleasure than in the pursuit of the red-men.

Professor Fitz Henry Stebbins returned to Vermont among "peace and plenty," soon after Ida's marriage with the man of her choice, Oscar Preston. He thought the country did not "agree" with him, though it was generally supposed that he did not "agree" with the country. But, be that as it may, the last heard of the learned gentleman he was teaching the village school down at Sodom.

Walter and Mattie were married, and began their new life with flattering prospects.

Gordon Morris lives with his daughter, and though he is growing old, he finds much enjoyment among his grand-children.

Sin Bain, the ex-robber, proved a valuable accessory in

breaking up numerous haunts of robbers and rogues who for many years infested the territory, and became widely known and respected by the settlers as the Robbers' Dread.

And to conclude, dear reader, should you ever have occasion to call at the residence of Richard Ellmore, do not be afraid of that noble-looking dog, lying with his nose between his paws, near the door. He will not bite you, nor will he move. Harmony is dead. 'Tis only his skin, you will see, stuffed with great care, and placed there by his master, as a token of his respect to the "ole dog."





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The Farmer and His Wife. Two males and two females.

The Farmer and His Son. Two males and two females.

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The bashful man's story,  
The matter-of-fact man,  
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Beauties of the law,  
Ge-lang! git up,  
The rate of life,  
Crowning glory of U.S.  
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Washington,  
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